# BING

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THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

# THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

**Founded in 1950**

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**Articles** for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor.
**Other Correspondence** concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer.

BING is the official journal of the International Crosby Circle and is published in the Spring, Summer and Winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC. All original material © Copyright ICC 2002.

# EDITORIAL

As we go to print, we are eagerly awaiting the Hofstra seminar on Bing which should be one of the most significant Crosby events for many years. Wig gives further information in the following pages and we shall of course have detailed reports on the actual event in the next issue. The workload Wig has shouldered in connection with the Hofstra event has been immense and our sincere thanks are due to him and Laura for all they have done.

Meanwhile, the plans for the Spokane celebration next May are proceeding and please note that this will be held on May 16 to 18 and not as previously announced in the magazine. Judy Schmid has done a tremendous amount of work not only in promoting this but also the twenty-fifth anniversary of Bing's death. Over 500 letters were sent to radio stations all over the USA highlighting the anniversary and as a result much radio coverage was obtained. We may not have had the same exposure as Elvis Presley but we caused quite a ripple and our thanks go out to all of you who made a difference. Greg Van Beek in the USA gave several radio interviews, National Public Radio in the USA had a short program about Bing, there were newspaper articles in the USA and UK and several radio presenters in the UK mounted nice tributes including Keith Skues who put on a 3-hour special. Ron Field kept the Crosby flag flying in Australia and Stan White, Maggie Ryan, Ken Barnes, Doreen Heasman, Stan Willcox, Arthur Blood, Maurice Beardmore, Michael Crampton, Barry Whittingham, Trevor Wagstaff, Keith Parkinson and many others did their bit in the UK with their local media.

Kathryn Crosby's new book *My Last Years with Bing* should be available by the time you are reading this as should another new book about Bing by Richard Grudens. See the *Books 'N' Bing* section for further details. Lionel Pairpoint's TV book has been delayed but I hope to give further details in the next issue.

The Leeds event was again a great success with Ken Barnes as the main speaker. Ken has produced an excellent new DVD of *Holiday Inn* with many extras and he also encouraged Universal Music to issue a new CD combining the songs from *Holiday Inn* and *White Christmas*.

In our last issue, I advised members that BBC-TV was preparing a series called "Legends" which will be shown on BBC2, probably in January next year, and which will include an hour-long programme about Bing. Since then, the BBC have authorised the production of another television feature on Bing which will be made by October Films and will be called *Bing on Bing*. Last year, the company

produced *Marilyn on Marilyn* which used only Marilyn Monroe's voice to link a documentary on her career. Thanks to the success of that venture, October Films have been given the go-ahead to produce similar 50-minute format programmes on Mae West, Billie Holiday and Bing. I have been involved along the way and it sounds as though the Bing project will produce a very interesting show indeed.

Ron Bosley has prepared the centenary calendar and our thanks go out to him for undertaking this at relatively short notice. A separate insert about the calendar is included for UK and European members and Wig will be supplying details to USA and Canadian members.

As we enter Bing's centenary year, now is the time for all members to make that special effort to tell your local paper / local radio station and anyone else in the media about Bing's centenary. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, ask not what your club can do for you, ask what you can do for your club. One phone call or letter may be all that is needed, so please give us your support.

The front cover of this issue has come from Ron Bosley's files and Greg Van Beek has kindly supplied the item for our back cover which shows Bing and Kathryn entertaining at the annual Christmas Show at the Laguna Honda hospital. Our thanks to Jim Harman for providing, for the inside back cover, a most interesting letter he received from Bing in 1969. Jim no longer lives at the address quoted.

So, with the centennial celebrations in full swing as we enter Bing's favourite time of year, I wish you all sincere seasonal greetings.

**Malcolm Macfarlane**

# SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

2003 has been another successful year for the International Crosby Circle, a year in which members have enjoyed, three splendid BING journals, the publication of Wig's commercial recording discography and importantly, the ICC has continued with its aim of promoting and preserving Bing's musical legacy. Examples of this are the distribution of the splendid Jonzo CDs, the preparation of the BING TV directory and all the hard work that has gone into promoting interest in Bing's centenary.

There is much to do in the coming year as we unite with our friends in CLUB CROSBY and we will keep members informed as events develop.

Members in Europe will be pleased to learn that **GUN DAMO** of Copenhagen, Denmark has agreed to become our European representative from spring 2003. Our members in Europe should remit their subscriptions to Gun as detailed on the inside cover of the magazine.

## NEW MEMBERS

It is a privilege to welcome the following 36 new members to the ICC and we trust they will enjoy and be enriched by being members of the club.

### USA

Tammy Abernethy (Clayton, North Carolina), Theodore Johansen (Sacramento, California), Joseph Castro (Emerson, New Jersey), Wayne Cunningham (St. Clair Shores, Michigan), Peter Wolfe (Oakland, Missouri), John Sammons (Keokuk, Iowa), Henry Sipila (Rocky Point, New York), Maurice Tenenzio (Chicago, Illinois), Donald Williams (Huntington Station, New York), Ken Weiss (New Rochelle, New York), Dan Pinch (Clermont, Florida), Jennifer Hay (Vancouver, Washington), Stanley Lebby (Hayward, California), Rev Robert Murphy (Grandview, Missouri), Lee Cook (Houston, Texas), Phillip Knowles, (Lenox, Massachusetts), Scott Elliot (Van Nuys, California), Ric Ross (Thousand Oaks, California), Betty Nickelsburg (Van Nuys, California), Caroline Boyce (Nashville, Tennessee), Alan Margolies (New York, New York), Sean Joyce (Buffalo, New York)

### CANADA

Robert Mitchell (Toronto, Ontario), Davis Scivens (Toronto, Ontario), James Krall (Nanaimo, British Columbia)

### ENGLAND

Geraldine Deaver (Bretton, Peterborough), Mrs R Stock, (Edmonton, London), Maurice Downes (Rotherham, South Yorkshire), Frank Challenger (Ripley, Derbyshire), Job Baddeley (Newcastle, Staffordshire), Bill England (Findon Valley, Sussex), Darren Kirk (Denton, Manchester), William Vincent (Henley in Arden, Warwickshire), Doug Sewell (Boston Spa, West Yorkshire),

### SCOTLAND

John Duncan (Kingston, Morayshire)

### IRELAND

Michael Bracken (Tullamore, Co Offaly)

## DEATHS

Sadly, I must draw attention to the deaths of the following members, all of whom derived much pleasure and enjoyment from their membership of the International Crosby Circle.

**Thomas Mooney** (Dublin, Ireland) was a great friend of the ICC and his long and appreciative letters will be missed. **Alex Stock** (Edmonton, London) loved his BING magazine and we are grateful that his widow will continue as a member of the club. **Philip Jay** passed away in July at the age of 71 having been a Bing fan from the age of 13. He had great pleasure in seeing Bing's appearances at the London Palladium. **Austin Crumbly** (Jarrow, Northumberland) was one of our older members and he was a regular attendee at the John Joyce and Frank Murphy nights. His last visit to a Crosby occasion was the John Joyce auction and his wife Dorothy, a son and daughter survive him.

We extend our sincere condolences to their relatives and friends.

## LEEDS 2002

Another successful event has come and gone and we are indebted to Ken Barnes for his interesting talk and presentation. Arnold Pope held our attention for the 20th time with his musical quiz and we can be grateful that there is still much to learn and enjoy about Bing's musical career 25 years after his passing. Malcolm has the full report later in the magazine.

We will meet on **October 5th 2003** in the name of ***The International Club Crosby.***

## SUBSCRIPTIONS 2003

The new rates indicated on your renewal slips were approved unanimously at the Leeds meeting on October 6th 2002. It is four years since the last increase in fees was agreed and although we are always reluctant to increase your subscriptions, we have to be realistic about the rising cost of producing and posting BING to members around the world.
We seek the support of all members for prompt payment of their dues on or before **JANUARY 1ST 2003.**

## CENTENARY CALENDAR 2003

Ron Bosley has crafted a beautiful celebration of Bing's career and he should be congratulated for producing a fine calendar with beautiful and sometimes rare photographs. Gwen Harvey, James Dineen, Derek Perkins and Chris Wray also merit our thanks for their contribution.

Ron Bosley has had to cope with some very sad and traumatic family matters in recent months and we are grateful that he was able to complete the calendar, despite the very sad events of the past year. We wish Ron and Vera happier times ahead.

Finally, may I express a wish that I will meet many of you at Hofstra and that your Christmas season will be joyous and bountiful.

**Michael Crampton**

# THE CROSBY YEARS

**by Gord Atkinson**

I am pleased to report that the production on digital compact discs of my 1975 radio anthology "The Crosby Years" is on schedule. This 14 hour musical review of Bing's life and career features my lengthy interviews with him and forty of his friends and relatives. As promised, we are releasing two CD's with each issue of BING. All fourteen will be available by the end of 2003 in celebration of the centenary of Bing's birth.

Now, Parts 5 and 6 are available to add to your collection. Our special guests on these two new releases include Rosemary Clooney, Pat Boone, Peggy Lee, John Scott Trotter, Johnny Mercer, Red Buttons, Nelson Riddle, Ken Carpenter, Edgar Bergen, Rich Little and Larry, Gary and Bob Crosby.

Part 5 covers the years of Bing's emergence as a major motion picture and radio star, his family life with Dixie Lee and their sons and closes with an intimate recollection by Rosemary Clooney about her first meeting with Bing.

Part 6 recalls Bing's passion for golf, his fondness for songs of the west and the music of Hawaii. In a rare moment of reflection he also identifies two of his recordings that were his own favourites, or as he put it, "The voice sounded pretty good".

All previous CD releases are still available. Parts 1 to 4 follow the early Crosby years in Spokane, New York and Hollywood and the two part, "A Crosby Christmas", features Bing's war time reminiscences with Bob Hope, Fred Astaire, Dinah Shore and a host of Hollywood celebrities along with his incomparable Christmas music collection. See below for details.

My sincere thanks for the many kind and encouraging comments that I have received and my great gratitude to Malcolm Macfarlane for his continuing support and encouragement.

## THE DEDICATION OF THE "CROSBY BRONZE"

May 3, 1981 was a day to remember for Bing's family, friends and fans. It was a beautiful spring afternoon when a handsome, larger-than-life, bronze statue of Bing was unveiled on the campus of his alma mater, Gonzaga University. As the emcee of the ceremony, which was broadcast on NBC television and radio, it was the most memorable assignment of my professional career.

The late Father Arthur Dussault, who was a boyhood friend of Bing, had conceived the idea of a permanent Crosby memorial. His friendship with a greatly gifted young sculptress, Debbie Copenhaver, motivated him to start a campaign to honour Gonzaga's most famous alumnus. As a former president of the university, he was an inspiration to all Crosby fans who had hoped that Bing would be remembered in a meaningful way.

Several months earlier I had received a call from Father Art inviting me, on behalf of Kathryn Crosby and the university faculty, to be the emcee of the auspicious ceremony. This great honour came about, I was told, because of my radio anthology, "The Crosby Years", and my thirty-two year friendship with Bing.

The prominent people who gathered around the statue that historic day included the Governor of Washington, John Spellman, the Mayor of Spokane, Ron Bair, Gonzaga President, Father Bernard Coughlin, the five time Academy Award winning composer, James Van Heusen, Bing's closest friend, the irreplaceable Phil Harris, my best pal, the incomparable Rich Little, Bing's sister Mary Rose Pool and the Honorary President and first lady of the International Crosby Circle, Kathryn Crosby. I even had the pleasure of talking to Bob Hope on a long distance line from Los Angeles, where he was involved that day in a charitable event.

It was also a delightful occasion to introduce in the audience many of my Crosby colleagues from across the U.S. and Canada and from around the world - all the way from Great Britain and Ireland to Mexico and Brazil.

It was appropriate during the ceremony that Jimmy Van Heusen, who wrote both Crosby and Sinatra hit songs, acclaimed Bing as "The greatest singer of popular songs of all time". Phil Harris, with humour, gave a loving tribute to his best friend and Bob Hope in a moving eulogy praised his old pal as, "One of the great voices of history". A hush fell over the campus when a gifted singer from England, Roy Chappell, who has long been associated with the Crosby repertoire, gave a beautiful rendering of "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day".

Highlights of the joyful 1981 proceedings at Gonzaga will be included in the forthcoming

epilogue to my radio anthology, "The Crosby Years".

Our fervent hope is that many of our Crosby friends will join us next May 16-18 at Gonzaga for the wonderful celebration being planned in honour of the centenary of Bing's birth.

**Gord Atkinson**

*Participants standing: from left, Kathryn Crosby, Fr. Arthur L. Dussault, Mary Rose Pool (Bing's sister), at podium, Gord Atkinson, seated (from left) Robert K. Powers (Gonzaga University Trustee), Hon. John Spellman (Governor, State of Washington), Jimmy Van Heusen and Roy Chappell.*

*(Editor: As before, a separate insert regarding these episodes of "The Crosby Years" is enclosed for UK readers, and US and Canadian members can obtain the CDs from:*
*"The Crosby Years"*
*Anderson Publishing*
*102 Boyce Avenue*
*Ottawa, Ontario, K2B 6J2*
*Canada*
*[Phone: (613) 721-0811] For U.S. and Canadian orders please note that payment can be made by check, Visa or Mastercard. The new secure e-mail address for orders is: admin@anderpub.com*

*The cost remains at $22.00 U.S. for 2 CDs and $12.00 for one CD which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN$30.00 for 2 CDs and CAN$16.00 for one CD.*

*As Gord has mentioned, the earlier offers of the 2-part "A Crosby Christmas" and parts one to four of "The Crosby Years" remain available.)*

# Spokane, May 16-18, 2003

To follow on from Gord's memories of the 1981 event at Gonzaga, we can give further details of the arrangements being made to hold a major celebration in Spokane to mark the centenary of Bing's birth. Please note that this will be held on May 16 to 18 and not as previously announced in the magazine. Gonzaga University is organising the centenary celebration itself and they will be inviting all registered members of the various Crosby fan clubs to attend a special reception which will also be honoured by the presence of various celebrities.

The plans are still to hold a reception in the late afternoon of Friday, May 16 following which we shall visit the Crosbyana Room in the old Crosby library on the Gonzaga campus. The next morning (May 17) we are planning a tour of Spokane which would also pick up many of the places frequented by Bing in his youth.

The major celebratory event will take place on the Saturday afternoon and evening. Gord Atkinson has kindly agreed to act as MC again and it is intended that Gary Giddins and Kathryn Crosby plus other guests will address us. It is also hoped to show rare Crosby films and have a display of Crosby memorabilia. On the Sunday, there will be a special service of worship.

The details of the event are still evolving and for up-to-date information, see Gonzaga University's web site at:
http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/bing/

**Malcolm Macfarlane**

# Bing Cherries - The Bing Crosby Musical

We mentioned this production in earlier issues and we were delighted to read that it is being staged at **Joe Franklin's Memory Lane,** 713 8th Ave. New York, NY 10036, (45th Street) from October 16, 2002 through January 05, 2003. The press release from Greenrevolution Productions states:-

> **Songs and Stories of Bing Crosby.**
> *Based on the life and music of Bing Crosby, this "three cherries on top" banana split of a musical tribute is written by Owen-Pahl Greene with Jessica Josell Wechsler, features musical direction by Christopher Cooley, boasts thirty-four beloved Bing Crosby hits, co-mingling with a snappy narrative about this famous crooner. Suitable for audiences from eight to eighty, this family oriented show will add another vibrant tribute to one of the great entertainers profiled in song and story.*

We hope to carry a review of the show in our next edition.

Next, Ken Crossland pens a tribute to one of the great ladies of show-business.

# Rosemary Clooney 1928-2002 - The Girl Singer

*"The lady I want you to welcome now is one of my dearest friends and in my opinion, one of the greatest singers we've ever had . . . Rosemary Clooney".*

Bing's intro, the London Palladium, 1976

When Rosemary Clooney died on 29 June 2002, we lost Bing's greatest and most durable duet partner. From their first appearance on a Chesterfield show in June 1952, the association spanned 25 years and ended with Bing's final performance for the BBC on 11 October 1977, just three days before his death.

When they first met, they seemed an unlikely match. It was Bing who made the first move. "How about a dame called Rosemary Clooney? Sings a good song and is purportedly personable" he wrote to Paramount when "White Christmas" was still at the planning stage. The "purportedly personable dame" was a 23 year old starlet, with a string of hit records behind her and a Hollywood career just beginning. There was nothing to suggest that a special partnership would be in the making.

Rosemary was born in Maysville, Kentucky in May 1928 and started her singing career just as the war ended. With her younger sister Betty, the Clooney Sisters came to the attention of bandleader Tony Pastor. Within three years, the sisters' act was discarded and Rosemary was a solo star. She signed for Columbia Records and joined Frank Sinatra and a young Tony Bennett under the controversial guidance of A&R man, Mitch Miller.

Miller's ear for the popular market was second to none. He soon delivered a string of novelty hits for Rosie - "Come On - A My House" in June 1951 being the big breakthrough, followed swiftly by numbers such as "Botch-A-Me", "Mambo Italiano" and "This Ole House". It was the kind of material that drove Sinatra from Columbia to Capitol but Rosemary revelled in the success. And just to prove there was another side to her vocal talents, she also delivered hits with more conventional material. "Hey There" and "Tenderly", along with "Come On-A" were songs that remained in her repertoire for almost 50 years.

Bing and Rosie duetted on "Zing A Little Zong" on that first Chesterfield show and she made several more guest appearances over the next 12 months. (Many of these early Crosby-Clooney duets can be found on the excellent compilation that Geoff Milne prepared for the Jasmine label a few years ago - "Something to Remember Me By", JASCD 335). "White Christmas" finally went into production in the autumn of 1953 and by the time it was completed, Bing and Rosie were firm friends.

Friends but never anything more. "We never had a romantic involvement, not even a one-nighter" said Rosemary in her second autobiography, "Girl Singer". The secret of their relationship perhaps, was that Rosemary was able to put her aside her sense of awe with Bing. "The best way to get along with Bing" she said "was to forget that he was Bing Crosby. It was not always easy."

Shortly before the filming of "White Christmas" began, Rosemary married the actor, Jose Ferrer. It was a stormy and turbulent relationship that ultimately ended in divorce in the Sixties. But in the latter part of the Fifties, Rosemary was balancing her career alongside a growing family - she produced a

baby each year for five years. The hit records and the films slowed down, replaced by a long players and television. Bing again figured in both, the wonderful "Fancy Meeting You Here" collaboration coming in 1958, alongside regular TV appearances together. It was a pattern that continued into the Sixties with a return to radio in "The Crosby-Clooney Show" that aired on CBS between 1960 and 1962.

But by the time the duo teamed up for "That Travellin' Two-Beat" in late 1963, things were on the slide for Rosie, both personally and professionally. The Sixties revolution in music hit her hard, as it did many of the solo stars of the Fifties, whilst the break up of her marriage and a series of failed relationships, including one with conductor Nelson Riddle, brought turmoil to Rosemary's personal life. A reliance on medication and drugs took a hold with alarming side effects. Soon she was addicted and facing a severe battle with over-eating and weight gain that would plague the rest of her life.

Rosemary had also started to take an active interest in politics, fuelled by closeness to the Kennedy family. When she and two of her children were there to witness Robert Kennedy's assassination in 1968, it proved to be the last straw. A near total mental and physical break down followed, heralding a seven year period in which she returned to the anonymity in which she was born.

Rosie credited Bing with giving her the chance to make a comeback. When he called inviting her to be part of a small "benefit" show in 1976, she had no inkling that it was a concert to mark Bing's 50th anniversary. The show went ahead in March at the 3000-seater Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. When Rosemary stood nervously in the wings, convinced that she could not remember her lyrics, it was Bing who appeared at her side. "If you're that worried" he said, "take the music with you". She did and the rest, as they say, is history.

Bing's one off concert became a US and European tour that took in the Palladium, Broadway and a host of other cities. Rosemary was there when Bing fell calamitously from the stage in Pasadena; she was there when he opened his arms to the audience in Brighton and mouthed "I love you", a most direct and un-Bing like show of emotion; and she was there a week later when he was laid to rest - the only showbiz face other than Bob Hope and Bing close personal friend, Phil Harris, to be invited to his funeral.

The two years with Bing were a turning point. A new recording contract with Concord Records soon followed and produced an album every year from 1976 through to 2001. Live appearances became routine again and personal happiness finally came with her marriage to long time friend and partner, Dante Di Paolo. Rosie was still touring and recording when she was diagnosed with lung cancer in January of this year, the illness which ultimately led to her death.

Rosie's passing robs us one not only a wonderful singer but also one of the few people in showbusiness who could speak first-hand and with authority about 'the real Bing'. For any feature on Bing, Rosie was first on the list. Whilst her second autobiography in 1999 showed traces of revisionism over her first from 20 years before, she remained steadfast in her loyalty to Bing. Only recently, she was lamenting the fact that "the waters just seem to have flowed over him" and contrasting the presence of Elvis in the American consciousness with the fact that "only aficionados still make an icon of Bing".

When asked recently about some of the stories of Bing the demon father, Rosie was quick with her rebuttal - "It wasn't like that" she said. "I know. I was there".

Rosemary's death at 74 seems oddly premature. A generation ago, when Bing died at the same age, the sadness was tempered by a view that his life had run its full course. Perhaps, a generation on, we are more greedy in our approach to mortality. Or maybe it's that Rosemary still seemed to have so much to offer. Whatever the reason, the girl singer from Maysville, Kentucky, will be sadly missed.

**Ken Crossland**

## "GOING MY WAY" featured

Bing's film "Going My Way," was shown in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' 75th Anniversary screening series, "Facets of the Diamond: 75 Years of Best Picture Winners," on August 26, in the Academy's Samuel Goldwyn Theater, located at 8949 Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. "Going My Way" was the first film to win Oscars for both Best Picture and Best Song. This has been accomplished only twice since: in 1958 by "Gigi" and in 1997 by "Titanic." "Swinging on a Star," the Best Song of 1944, was used as the evening's curtain music.

Another "Best Picture" with a Bing connection is "The Greatest Show On Earth" and this was shown by the Academy on October 21.

## The Fourth Scarborough Jazz 'n' Swing Forum

Eric Jackson and Frank May sent us details of this forthcoming two day event to be held at the Hotel St. Nicholas in Scarborough, UK on March 12 - 14, 2003. The particular attractions for Bing fans are two features by our member John Petters. The first is a 90 minute talk on "Bing Crosby - Jazz Singer" and then John presents his new stage show "Bing - The Road to Rhythm & Romance" which will be touring the UK next year. Further details can be found at www.traditional-jazz.com or call 0800 496 0673.

Christmas is A-Comin'
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## ROSEMARY CLOONEY - A PERSONAL REMEMBRANCE

Rosemary Clooney's death in Beverly Hills, California from lung cancer on June 29, 2002 was reported in all the major newspapers across the United States, as well as producing numerous favorable re-appraisals of her long career as a popular singer in many other publications. Ken Crossland has already covered some of those aspects of Rosemary's passing and I would like, instead, to comment on a different facet of Rosemary Clooney's life, that of her relationship with the ICC, which my wife, Laura, and I had the privilege and pleasure of experiencing directly. Rosemary was the first official honorary member of the ICC, and she told me on two different occasions how much she appreciated our efforts to preserve Bing's memory and legacy, as well as how much she enjoyed reading each issue of our magazine. Rosemary Clooney was, indeed, a valued member of the International Crosby Circle for many years.

Laura and I first met Rosemary in Richmond, Virginia in July of 1993 when she gave an evening performance at a beautifully restored downtown theater as part of a ten-day jazz and popular music festival. This came about as the result of a telephone call I had received a few weeks earlier from Rosemary's manager in California. He had called me regarding a tribute concert to Bing that she was planning for Carnegie Hall in New York City that November. Specifically, her manager told me that Rosemary was looking for a copy of Bing's famous "Crosby medley" that he had often performed during their concert tours together in 1976 and 1977, which she did not have in her own music collection. In response, I was pleased to send a tape of the entire London Palladium recording to Rosemary for her use in preparing her Carnegie Hall tribute to Bing. For a full report of that memorable evening, including her magnificent recreation of the "Crosby medley", please see my article "Rosemary Salutes Bing At Carnegie Hall" in "BING" 106 (summer issue of 1993).

The next time that Laura and I had the pleasure of talking with Rosemary was at Gary Giddins' Lincoln Center lecture on Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong in New York City on May 23, 2000, which I reported on in "BING" 125 (summer issue of 2000). During our conversation that evening. Rosemary again told me how pleased she was to be a member of the ICC and repeated her congratulations for the work that we were all continuing to do on Bing's behalf.

There was absolutely no question that Rosemary Clooney truly loved Bing, and she was ever grateful for all that he did to resurrect her career in 1976-1977, at a time when alcohol, drugs and personal family problems had almost brought her public performances to an end. When Bing first contacted her to appear with him at a concert in California, she thought it would be only a one-time event. Instead, Bing made certain that Rosemary would continue to sing at all of his concerts during those last two busy years of Bing's career. As a result, no one was closer to Bing musically during that time than Rosemary, and the warmth of their performances together was obvious to all of the audiences who had the opportunity to attend their concerts here and abroad.

Rosemary Clooney went on to another quarter century of increasing popularity and success as a solo performer after Bing's death, and she made many well-received LP and CD albums for Concord Records of California, including an excellent tribute to Bing himself entitled "Rosie Sings Bing" in 1978. (This album has now been reissued on compact disc. Concord CCD-4060.)

During these last twenty-five years, Rosemary became one of the most respected interpreters of classic popular music in the United States, and she made regular concert and nightclub appearances throughout the country and appeared on television as well. In the process, she moved far beyond her early identification with such novelty hits as "Come

On-A-My House" and "Papa Loves Mambo" to join other leading singers like Ella Fitzgerald and Peggy Lee as an exponent of the music of leading American composers including George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern and Cole Porter. Rosemary also made a number of joint appearances with her close personal friend, singer Michael Feinstein, at various times.

Rosemary Clooney was exceptionally friendly and most gracious each time that Laura and I were able to talk with her, and she went out of her way to praise Bing both as a performer and for the personal support that he always provided her. Unlike many "celebrities", Rosemary was easily approachable and most charming both off and on the stage. It was a distinct pleasure for me to have known her personally, and the world of Crosbyana has suffered a major loss with her passing.

A special tribute will be paid to Rosemary Clooney during the Hofstra University Conference on Bing's life and career which takes place in New York, November 14-16, 2002.

**BING'S MALTESE CONNECTION**

During my 35-year career as a Foreign Service Officer in the United States Diplomatic Corps, I was assigned from 1974 to 1977 as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the American Embassy in Valletta, Malta. During that time, I was rather surprised to learn that Bing had a somewhat indirect connection with that small Mediterranean island nation going back to 1955. And recently, more than a quarter century later, Bing's Maltese relationship manifested itself again in an unexpected manner. Here is the story.

While living in Malta with my family, we observed many colorful festivals and parades, which take place annually in every town and village on the two major islands of Malta and Gozo, along with religious ceremonies and evening fireworks celebrations. During one of these festivals, I was told that the honorary leader of that day's parade was the locally-famous operatic tenor, Oreste Kirkop, who had retired to Malta after a career performing in Europe and, briefly, in the United States. This rang a bell with me, as I remembered his name from the Paramount Pictures musical film of the mid-1950's, "The Vagabond King", as well as the fact that Bing had made a short promotional film to introduce the Maltese tenor to theater audiences of the time that was entitled "Bing Presents Oreste".

I never had the opportunity to see Bing's promotional short, and I doubt that many ICC members did either. It is described in Fred Reynolds' book, "THE ROAD TO HOLLYWOOD", as an eleven minute short that was filmed in color by Paramount, during which Bing only introduces Oreste, who thereafter sings several songs, presumably from Rudolph Friml's score for "The Vagabond King". Perhaps our fellow ICC member and film expert, Bob Deflores, might be able to turn up a copy of this rare short one of these days for release on video by Festival Films of Minnesota. Let's hope so.

The full-length film in which Oreste starred with Kathryn Grayson, "The Vagabond King" was made in Hollywood in 1955 and released to theaters across the United States in 1956. Filmed in color and the widescreen Vista Vision system (the same process Paramount used for Bing's 1954 blockbuster, "White Christmas"), "The Vagabond King" was an obvious attempt by Paramount to capitalize on the extremely popular musical films that Mario Lanza had been making for MGM, several of which also had starred Kathryn Grayson.

Paramount apparently hoped that they had found a similar star in Oreste, but it was not to be. Oreste did possess a sparkling operatic-style tenor voice, perhaps a little less robust than Mario Lanza's, but with a ringing lyrical quality that was somewhat more at ease in the upper ranges than Lanza's. However, Oreste's acting style was not impressive, and "The Vagabond King" was not a box office success.

As a result, Oreste and Paramount parted company, and he left Hollywood never to return. A leading film reviewer described the movie as "...a bland remake of Rudolph Friml's operetta about vagabond poet Francois Villon. Oreste was touted as a new musical star in 1956, but didn't quite make it. . ."

Unfortunately. Paramount's 1956 version of "The Vagabond King" never made it to commercial video either, and it has rarely been shown on television, even on those cable channels that feature musical films from the golden decades of the 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s. So by the time that Laura and I saw Oreste in Malta, some twenty years after his try for Hollywood success, Oreste was almost completely unknown outside of his own country. And except for a few references to the short Paramount film that Bing made to introduce him, I doubt if many Crosby collectors would have ever heard of Oreste's name at all.

Now, fast forward another quarter century to the present. During a recent visit to our home in Arlington, Virginia, by our good friend and leading Bing collector. Ken Gray of Pittsburgh, he brought along several rare items from his record collection to share with us, various items that had not previously been reported as part of the official Crosby canon.

One disc which caught my attention was a single-sided 10 inch 78 rpm vinyl record with a light blue label stating that it was a "Souvenir Record - for private and non-commercial use - not licensed for radio or TV broadcasting". And the title was listed simply as "Bing Crosby-Bob Hope-Oreste", without any identification as to its origin, with only the

reference number "EB-1419" on the label and in the wax of the record itself.

On listening to this previously unknown recording, which Ken Gray said he had found many years ago in Chicago, it was obvious that it probably was made at the time of filming the "Bing Presents Oreste" short in 1955. But to what purpose, if it wasn't to be used for radio or television promotion? How many copies were pressed, and to whom were they distributed? Doubtless, we will never know.

Nevertheless, to give ICC members a better appreciation of this rare record, Laura has kindly transcribed the text from a cassette tape that I had made from the disc. As you will see, it consists only of Bob Hope's brief introduction of Bing, who then praises Oreste's fine vocal abilities, after which Oreste sings a delightful version of the popular song of the day, "Cara Mia", before Bob Hope closes the record with a pitch for listeners to see "Bing Presents Oreste" at their theaters.

By the way, Oreste's version of "Cara Mia" on this record is a lovely, lilting one, sung with great verve in the lyrical operetta style. And the last note, which Oreste holds at great length without apparent strain, really has to be heard to be believed. As the cliché goes, "that guy sure could sing!"

**Bing Crosby-Bob Hope-Oreste**

"Hi there, this is Bob Hope, and I want to give you a little inside information about a short subject that will soon be playing your local theaters. It's called "Bing Presents Oreste". And as the title implies, Old Iron Pipes himself is on view. But the real treat is Paramount's new singing star, Oreste.

This boy's voice is so great that Paramount decided not to wait for "The Vagabond King", in which Oreste stars, to be released, but to make a short which they can rush right out to the public.

Bing must have heard that line about "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em", because he's not only jumped on the bandwagon, he's driving it. Listen:"

"Hi, folks, my name is Bing Crosby. What I'm about to do represents a considerable switch for me, because I'm gonna plug another singer. This is a fellow named Oreste. That's it, just plain, Oreste.

I want you to remember that name, because you're never gonna forget the voice. This guy hits notes that are - well, they're super-stratospheric! He hits notes that I've never heard of. Just listen to this:"

Oreste sings "Cara Mia":

"Cara mia, why, must we say goodbye
Each time we part, my heart wants to die...
Cara mia, mine, say those words divine
I'll be your love, 'till the end of time."

Bob Hope: "How about that! Don't forget, you can hear a lot more of that voice in "Bing Presents Oreste" at your favorite theater shortly."

**********

I would like to thank Ken Gray for bringing this very unusual bit of Crosbyana to my attention so that I could describe it for this issue of "BING". Which just goes to prove, once again, that there may well be no such thing as a "complete Crosby collection" anywhere in this world. There always seems to be something else out there that collectors may never have heard of, much less have a copy of in their possession. And so, the quest must continue, if you are so inclined. The best of luck to you!

By the way, for trivia collectors, "Cara Mia" was a million selling record for tenor David Whitfield, accompanied by Mantovani's orchestra, back in 1954.

And thus endeth the tale of Bing's Maltese connection in this our year of 2002.

**HOFSTRA CONFERENCE UPDATE**

By the time everyone is reading this issue of "BING", while the Christmas holiday season approaches, the three-day Hofstra University conference about Bing's unparalleled impact on American popular culture will already have taken place.

The necessarily-early editorial deadline for "BING" meant that reports on the conference from those ICC members fortunate enough to attend must be delayed until spring rolls around next year. But as we go to press with this issue, I wanted to share with you an advance appraisal of the conference which appeared in the September 10, 2002 edition of NEWSDAY, a leading daily newspaper from the New York area that was sent to me by fellow ICC member Ernie Sutkowski.

**On The Road To Hofstra**

By Peter Goodman, Staff Writer

"Do you suspect that hype and television are not the best way to create a true American

idol? Then Hofstra University's upcoming conference might be a good destination for a fall weekend.

After all the nonsense associated with the (recently broadcast) made-for-TV contest series "American Idol", there will be a three-day examination of the real thing: Bing Crosby, at Hofstra. It's difficult to categorize Crosby, who was one of the nation's greatest singers; a superlative jazz artist; a fine film actor who created several American personas, from the approachable Catholic priest to the all-American paterfamilias; an inveterate golfer, and an extraordinarily successful businessman (and an abusive dad).

Rather than fit all that into one uncomfortable suit of clothes, "Bing ! Crosby and American Culture" (Nov. 14-16) offers an overstuffed weekend. There are the required academic panels (one on Crosby and American Catholicism includes a professor whose paper is "Saint Bing: Apatheia, Masculine Desire and the Films of Bing Crosby").

Even though "Der Bingle" died in 1977, and many of his contemporaries also are gone, four members of the Crosby family are expected to be there, including widow Kathryn Crosby. The guest list includes singers Margaret Whiting and Tony Martin; Irving Berlin's daughter, Linda Emmett; one of Rosemary Clooney's sons with Jose Ferrer, Gabriel Ferrer; conductor/arranger Skitch Henderson - the list goes on.

"His influence was immeasurable on American singing, on popular music, on American culture," conference director Ruth Prigozy asserted. "He created personas in various movies which became the quintessential American men."

"He reassured the nation during the Depression and World War II, was the Number One box-office star several times during the 1940s, and did not begin to fade from the musical scene, despite the competition with Frank Sinatra, until the late 1950s, when rock and roll arrived."

"For detailed information, contact Hofstra University."

Except for the (perhaps inevitable) repetition of Gary Crosby's largely-discredited claim that Bing was an "abusive-father, this NEWSDAY article provides a well-written summary of the purpose and breadth of Hofstra's unprecedented review of Bing's major influence on American life and culture in the 20th century.

For those ICC members who attend the Hofstra conference, Laura and I will enjoy meeting you there and getting to know many of you personally for the first time.

And for those who could not attend, you will be able to read extensive coverage of the many scheduled events in the spring issue of "BING". See you then!

**F. B. (Wig) Wiggins**
October 5, 2002

# Sinatra Sings Sinatra

**Running this article in BING magazine will probably cause our late editor, Reg Bristo, to turn in his grave! However, there is a lot of Bing content and Greg Van Beek has put together a very interesting account of his visit to see Frank Sinatra Jr. so do please read on!**

On Tuesday, August 27, 2002, I attended a special concert by Frank Sinatra, Jr. in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the Northern Lights Theater. The performance was billed as "Sinatra Sings Sinatra"; Frank, Jr. performing some of his father's most famous songs, using the original arrangements and, in some cases, the original musicians who played on the original Frank Sinatra recordings. Fittingly, the Northern Lights Theater, which resembles a classic nightclub in design, is part of the Potawatomi Bingo & Casino, so the setting was very much "Las Vegas style". During my 40 mile commute to Milwaukee, I phoned Terry Woodson, Frank's music director, at the Pfister (Milwaukee's oldest and most exclusive hotel) where he, Frank, and the rest of the musicians were staying. He told me to drop by the front of the stage after the concert, and he would see to it that I get backstage to meet Frank, Jr. So this was shaping up to be quite an evening!

Not long after we took our seats, Terry Woodson struck up the overture, comprised of many of the tried and true Sinatra chestnuts. Without introduction, or warning, Frank, Jr. suddenly appeared from out of the left wing of the stage. Immediately, he launched into the title track from the very first Sinatra album on the Reprise label, 1960's "Ring A-Ding Ding". I was immediately struck by two things. One, (seemingly) without trying, he sounds almost EXACTLY like his famous Dad in his heyday. The familiar Sinatra sound and phrasing was very much at hand. Secondly, he looks uncannily like his dad. Of course, our seats were towards the back, but if you blinked, you'd swear it was 'ol blue eyes himself up there serenading you! Frank Jr. even replicated perfectly the mannerisms and facial expressions that were so much a part of his famous dad.

The second song of the evening was a real surprise and treat for me. A swinging version of the Bing Crosby classic from Irving Berlin's *Holiday Inn,*

"Be Careful, It's My Heart". So Frank's first two selections were both from the 1960 "Ring A Ding Ding" album. Before the night was over, he'd perform a third song from this great album, "The Coffee Song".

The rest of the program contained songs all familiar in the Sinatra repertoire for so many years. Songs like "The Way You Look Tonight", "Come Rain or Come Shine", "Street of Dreams", "I've Got You Under My Skin", "The Lonesome Road", "I've Got the World on A String", "Angel Eyes" (with 87 year old Bill Miller at the piano, who performed on the original Frank Sr. recording of this song in 1958), "S'wonderful" (complete with the seldom-heard verse), "The Moon Was Yellow" (another Crosby gem), "For Once In My Life", "The Gal That Got Away / It Never Entered My Mind", "New York, New York" (to a huge ovation), and several others, closing with the last few bars of "My Way" ('...yes, it was my wa-ay').

The orchestra, which utilized many players from the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, was so large (I counted 11 violins) it overflowed into the wings! In fact, several of the musicians on either side were not visible if you were seated center stage. But they sounded magnificent! I've never heard an orchestra look and sound so wonderful!! What a joy to hear these great American standards performed with those classic arrangements - and with the classic sound of Frank Sinatra!! Truth be told, Frank held the entire audience (myself included) in the palm of his hand. We all sat mesmerized, lost in the magic, for the entire 100 minutes he was onstage. It's worth noting, there was no opening act, nor was there an intermission, much like the performances Bing gave in 1976-77.

Frank Jr. also spent a bit of the time onstage seated on a stool, just telling stories. He mentioned how he was celebrating, almost exactly to the day, forty years in show business. There were amusing tales of opening for Phil Harris in Las Vegas for many years. At the time of the US Bi-centennial in 1976, Frank said "I had a hard time convincing Phil that Jack Daniels did NOT sign the declaration of Independence"! He also talked about attending Phil's 90th birthday party in 1994 in his hometown of Linton, Indiana. Phil was still drinking "with both hands", and said to Frank, "Well Frankie, now you're getting a little older and have to sit down on stage. You gotta keep them pillows in good condition, baby, keep them biscuits firm!!". Phil died the following year at 91.

After the concert ended, I made my way down to the front of the stage, and shook hands with Terry Woodson, introducing myself. Up until that moment, we hadn't met in person. I presented him with a CD I compiled for the occasion, of Bing performing some of Frank Sinatra's repertoire, as well as Bing, Gary Crosby, and Frank Jr. performing "Fugue for Tinhorns" on the Hollywood Palace TV show in 1969. Terry seemed genuinely touched and grateful to have the songs. He then told me to follow a gentleman nearby, who would direct me backstage where he would meet me.

Once in the dressing room area, I found the room to be packed with people. Most, not surprisingly, were of Italian descent. Some looked like they just stepped off the set of The Sopranos! I chatted for a bit with Terry while waiting for my turn with Frank. Terry told me they had just returned from a 2-week stint at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, which was a big success. While waiting, the magnificent Bill Miller peeked out of his dressing room, still immaculately dressed in his tuxedo, smiling broadly. I couldn't get over to him to say hello, but it was a joy, nonetheless, to see this man who was Frank Sinatra's chief pianist from 1951 until 1995, save for about 5 years in the late 1980's, early '90s.

After a few minutes, Frank's assistant came by with a stack of 8 x 10 glossies. I should point out that photography was prohibited during the performance. Subsequently, cameras were not allowed inside the casino, and to get to the theater, one had to pass through the casino. So I was not able to take any photographs backstage either. I had brought along a copy of Frank Jr.'s wonderful 1996 album "As I Remember It", which this concert was based on, in the hopes I could have him sign it for me. When I was offered a signed 8 x 10, I gratefully accepted it instead!

Frank handed me the photo after he finished signing it, and shook my hand. We chatted a bit about some mutual friends, one of which he (jokingly) said he didn't care to admit he knew! I presented him with the remaining copy of the Bing Crosby CD I prepared for the occasion, which seemed to please him, as I was told he too is a Crosby fan. He handed it to his assistant to hold onto for him until the meet and greet was over. My time with Frank was very brief, as there was still a long line waiting outside the door to meet him. I would say in total, I was backstage about 15 minutes.

There are a few things which stand out in my mind from our short visit, however. One is how slight a figure Frank Jr. is. At 5'10", I'm not terribly tall myself, but Frank was several inches shorter than I am. Another thing that struck me is how quiet in demeanor he was. He spoke very softly, and without much emotion. Not at all animated, or spirited. In fact, I don't recall seeing him smile, not even for the few select close friends who were allowed to pose for photos with him (most were ladies who smuggled small cameras backstage inside their purses). I don't mean to imply that he was unpleasant to be around. Not at all. In fact, he was most cordial. It just seemed as if he was a bit uncomfortable in the presence of

so many people who were unfamiliar to him, though.

All told, it was a most memorable evening. One I won't soon forget. Not just for the music, but also for the generosity and kindness of some close friends who arranged for me to meet Frank Jr.. I would heartily recommend the show to any and all Bing Crosby fan club members. If "Sinatra Sings Sinatra" makes a stop in your hometown, don't miss it. I guarantee you'll have a great time!

**Greg Van Beek**

*(Editor: Thanks, Greg, for a great article. Not content with a focus on Sinatra, I am now turning to Elvis Presley! Has the Editor gone mad? What's going on? Well, none of us could have missed the massive publicity of the 25th. anniversary of Elvis's death but interestingly it threw up several articles lamenting the fact that Bing would not have the same amount of coverage. The first comes from the Baltimore Sun of August 17 to whom we give grateful acknowledgement.)*

# Bing Crosby's Rich Voice Enchanted All

**Way Back When: by Frederick N. Rasmussen**

In all of the hoopla surrounding the 25th anniversary of Elvis Presley's death (has it really ever ended?), the death of Bing Crosby, a few weeks later in 1977, has seemingly been forgotten.

Crosby, one of the most popular entertainers of the 20th century, recorded more than 1,700 songs for Decca and sold more than 300 million records during his 50-year career.

He also appeared in such movies as *The Big Broadcast of 1932, The Big Broadcast of 1936, The Bells of St. Mary's, Holiday Inn* and *Going My Way,* for which he won the Academy Award for Best Actor, and was a fixture on network radio and television for years.

Perhaps his most successful films were the Road comedies - *Road to Zanzibar* and *Road to Singapore* - with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour.

"He will be remembered as one of the best-loved and most highly respected figures in theatrical history," said William S. Paley, CBS chairman, at Crosby's death on Oct. 14, 1977.

Crosby, who Paley signed to a national radio contract in 1931 after hearing his rendition of "I Surrender, Dear," was playing golf in Spain when he suffered a fatal heart attack. He was 73.

He was gifted with a smooth, rich, mellow baritone and an uncanny vocal agility with lyrics. "Bing Crosby's voice was like gold being poured out of a cup," observed Louis Armstrong.

Throughout his life, Crosby was identified with what became his theme song, "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day." He also was known for his scat singing and his bub-bub-bub-boing, which delighted both audiences and impersonators.

He was born Harry Lillis Crosby in Tacoma, Wash., the son of a bookkeeper. He acquired his nickname from a comic strip, "The Bingville Bugle," that he spent hours reading as a child. His family, noting his fondness for the strip, began calling him Bingo and later dropped the "o."

While attending Gonzaga University, Crosby played drums in a student band, influenced heavily by Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Al Jolson and Bix Beiderbecke. In 1925, he and Al Rinker, the band's piano player, left college and headed for Los Angeles, where they formed a new act, "Two Boys and a Piano".

The great orchestra leader, Paul Whiteman, hired the act in 1927 after hearing a performance at the Metropolitan Theater in Los Angeles. They were later joined by Harry Barris and were renamed The Rhythm Boys, touring on the Keith Orpheum vaudeville circuit and later appearing in Whiteman's movie, *The King of Jazz.*

After leaving Whiteman, the trio continued playing West Coast clubs, and Crosby made his radio debut in 1931 singing with Gus Arnheim's Orchestra at the Coconut Grove. He proved to be so popular on the radio that when he played the Paramount Theater in New York in 1932, he did so for 20 consecutive weeks.

Crosby lent a deft touch to a song and was able to make listeners understand and believe in the lyrics.

"I think that every man who listens to my records or hears me on the radio believes firmly that he sings as well as I do. I have none of the mannerisms of a trained singer. If I've achieved any success it's because I've managed to keep that kind of naturalness in my style, the phrasing which any Joe Doakes possesses," wrote Crosby in his 1952 autobiography, *Call Me Lucky.*

"Bing Crosby changed the rules of the game. He was the first American popular singer to relax - and by doing so he affected thousands of vocalists to come. A generation or two of young men wooed their girlfriends differently because of him, imitating his straightforward, easy sincerity," said The Evening Sun.

"And without intending to do so, he gently folded over the social fabric of America so the black and white ways of making music began to touch," said the newspaper.

*(Editor: Nice to see Bing remembered in this way. It was unrealistic for us to expect that Bing would receive the same publicity as Elvis or Frank Sinatra. The generational influences are different and so many people who grew up with Bing have passed on as well. However we can do our best to*

*help new generations rediscover Bing and the next article from the Washington Post in August will have helped.)*

# The Day Music Died

**by Diana West**

Brace yourself for a whole lotta shakin' this today for the 25th anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley. Americans may not be a deeply reflective people, but that doesn't mean they don't take matters of celebrity life and death very seriously. Particularly celebrity death - the more outre, the better - and particularly at nice, round five-year intervals.

And particularly given the unsubtle hints from the corporate world. Take Elvis. It turns out, according to a New York Post article outlining an elaborate business plan "to resuscitate a legend," the pending outbreak of Elvis worship is about as natural as his cause of death by drug overdose at age 42. Indeed, Presley record sales have lately "plummeted," while the path to Graceland has become noticeably less beaten. But rather than let "the King of Rock 'n' Roll" and his music sales die off, RCA and the Presley estate came up with a plan to link Elvis tracks to everything from Disney's "Lilo and Stitch" to the World Cup.

The 25th death-day campaign has paid off: Elvis' rendition of "A Little Less Conversation," remixed for a Nike spot, topped European and American pop charts this summer. As further testament to the Presley people's media muscle, NBC this weekend will air its "restored" version of "Loving You," that veritable movie classic in which Elvis is promoted to stardom. Used to be that life imitated art; now, it seems, after-life imitates art, too.

Having groomed the late singer for posthumous success, RCA will get down to business: stocking music stores with "best-of" Elvis sets for the kids and "unreleased" material for older audiences. There are even plans, what the heck, to re-master and re-release the entire Presley songbook. And won't we all know it: RCA is shelling out $10 million to sell the King this time - "more," reports the Post, "than it has spent on advertising for the work of any other artist in its history." Which means exactly what beside the fact that anniversary outpourings of affection (and cash) for a late pop star takes an awful lot of orchestration? Before answering, it's worth noting that shortly after Presley's demise in 1977, Bing Crosby, a pop star of even greater stature, also passed away. With more No. 1 hits to his name (38) than any singer to this day - the Beatles have 24 and Elvis has 18 - many of Crosby's achievements as a multimedia entertainer remain unrivaled: A radio star for 30 years, Bing made more recordings and charted records than any singer (dead or alive), and was the only movie star to rank as the No. 1 box-office attraction five times between 1915 and 1980, garnering four Academy Award nominations, including one Oscar, along the way. As biographer Gary Giddins has noted, when Crosby died of a heart attack after walking off the 18th green (famous last words: "That was a great game of golf, fellas"), that "stature seemed especially secure: His obituaries triggered so many record sales" - more than a million discs a day - "that MCA (Decca) could not handle the orders and farmed them out to other plants." That, of course, was then. Not only does Crosby no longer rate the star treatment, he's vanished into a black hole. Why? The dominance of rock 'n roll provides a partial answer; its surprising endurance has all but obliterated everything that came before Elvis. But near-sighted hindsight isn't the complete explanation. The emergence and entrenchment of "youth" culture adds to it, but the preponderance of AARP members among Presley fans today fails to explain his cultural currency and Crosby's obsolescence.

Another reason why Bing, not to mention the culture he may have epitomized, are today viewed as antiquities has something to do with the complex legacy of some of his most famous fans, the "Greatest Generation." Its collective heroism surely won World War II, but its members ended up having the tar beaten out of them in the culture wars that took them unawares on their return. (And I say this as a devoted daughter of a veteran of the Normandy invasion.) While those Greatest guys may have gone on to sell more insurance, build more buildings, buy more cars, and raise bigger families than generations preceding them, for a tangle of reasons - "booming" demographics and unprecedented affluence across age and class, to name two - they ended up failing to make an enduring mark on the culture they sacrificed so much to preserve. Weirdly enough, they have left few indelible tracks through the rock culture that arose after the war they won. In giving the world a new start, they seem to have ruled themselves out of the race.

No wonder Elvis Presley's death anniversary is such a big deal. It takes us back to what amounts to the dawn of our times. What better reason to buy a few records?

*(Editor: What a pity that MCA / Paramount / The Crosby family didn't also have an "elaborate business plan to resuscitate a legend," and promote Bing's 25th. anniversary. We have done our best and we are trying hard to make the centenary a commercial success for those who will benefit. However most of us are amateurs in the professional media world and we can only envy the muscle put behind the Elvis campaign. Other articles continuing the "forgotten man" theme were written by Jesse Hamlin in the San Francisco Chronicle of October 14 and by Robert Walton in*

*"In Tune" magazine for October. I have no problem with this approach as it can only help newcomers to Bing to research him more fully. There was also a nice tribute to Bing in the UK's 'Weekly News' of October 12 and 'Yours' magazine even gave away a free Crosby CD to mark the 25th, anniversary of Bing's passing. Harry Kirkman of Surrey in the UK sent me a cutting from the high circulation "Daily Mirror" which really says it all for so many of us and we reproduce this alongside with thanks to the "Mirror".*

MY THING FOR BING

AFTER all the hype a few weeks back commemorating the 25th anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley, it seems to be forgotten that two months later, in the same year, we lost another stalwart of the entertainment world – Mr Bing Crosby.

I am privileged that I saw Bing at the London Palladium at the end of his 1977 season.

He was in fine voice and full of good humour.

At the end of the show we gave him a 10-minute standing ovation.

I thought – and still think – that he was the greatest performer of them all.

Little did we know that two weeks later he would die on a golf course in Madrid.

*John K Brown*
*Sidcup, Kent*

THE GREATEST: Bing on a 1975 visit to the UK

# TRADING POST

**Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries**
**Please send all advertisements to the Editor**

**Arthur Blood,** 597 Osmaston Rd., Derby DE24 8NE, UK

Arthur has produced a new stamp (see below) especially for the centenary. Cost £3 for 20, including postage, to UK members. USA members can order from Wig Wiggins, price $5 for 20.

Also Arthur still has some of the coloured A4 sized (approx. 8" by 11.5") collage of the stamps he has produced in recent times and this has been produced as a limited issue of 250. It costs £3 for UK members and $5 for US and Canadian readers. Contact Arthur direct in the UK and Wig in the USA and Canada. The collage would look lovely in a frame. See page 16 of the last issue of BING for a photograph of the collage.

**Michael B. Schnurr,** 22449 Lake Road, #110 Rocky River, Ohio 44116, U.S.A. (email: mbschnurr@cox.net)

"Bing Crosby videos for sale/trade, large list available on request. Other lists available on Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Perry Como, Julie Andrews and Andy Williams. Also a huge misc. list with others like Dean Martin, Dinah Shore, Bob Hope, Vic Damone, Tony Bennett, and many more. Tapes can be supplied in NTSC, PAL or SECAM."

**Stan Woodford,** 6 Mariam Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 6QA, UK (tel. 01708 445049)

Stan has on offer many VHS (UK format) video items and film song compilations of Bing that may be of interest. SAE for lists please.

## BING BINDERS

Keep your magazines in mint condition by storing them in these specially made binders. They have blue covers with BING in gold on the spine and hold 10 copies, which allow them to either be inserted or removed, yet also open flat for easy reading. Costing £6.99 inc postage, £7.99 to Europe, £8.99 elsewhere, they are available from Ken Mason, 12 Wycomb Grove, Melton Mowbray, Leics. LE13 1EQ

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## Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

**Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,**
Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 236 Andrieux St., Sonoma, California 95476-6909, USA (tel. 707 996 0257 - e-mail Bingsfriends@yahoo.com - Web Site address http://home.earthlink.net/~erinssmile/

The club celebrated its twentieth anniversary earlier this year and it issues a sixteen page newsletter every two months. The annual subscription is $12 (USA) and $16 (outside the USA).

**Club Crosby, BINGANG**
Wayne L. Martin, Editor
435 So. Holmes Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri 63122, USA
(e-mail: ClubCrosby@aol.com)

The club issues a sixty page magazine twice a year. Subscriptions are $12 (USA and Canada) and $18 for Australia, New Zealand and South America. Members in Europe should enrol via Ken Crossland, 9 Arden Drive, Dorridge, Solihull, B93 8LP - subscription £12.

**The Victorian Bing Crosby Society**
Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

The club issues a newsletter every two months and holds regular film nights.

## Internet sites:

**Bing Crosby Internet Museum:**
www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/~crosby/

This is a wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

**The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby**
http://www.geocities.com/crissi_n/bing.html

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**OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES**
**We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.**

**In Tune International,** 10 Collingwood Drive, Mundesley, Norfolk NR11 8JB, UK (phone/fax: 01263 722818, e-mail: gerry.stonestreet@virgin.net)

Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £16.50 for the UK, £18.60 for Europe and £24 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card. Highly recommended.

**Memory Lane,** P O Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England.(www.memorylane.org.uk.
e-mail: mail@memorylane.org.uk)

*Memory Lane* is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - Britain's favourite vocalist. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus Picture Pages, CD and Cassette reviews, Readers Letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A "must" for 78 RPM collectors. 3 First Class stamps (or 3 IRCs) will bring a sample copy and full details.

**Sinatra Music Society,** 36 Hillcrest Rd., Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield B72 1EN, UK (tel: 0121-350-0683)

**Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch,** c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

**Tony Bennett Appreciation Society,** c/o Mark Fox, 13 Sunnyside, Heckmondwike, W. Yorks WF16 0LN, UK (phone: 01924 402469)

**Pat Boone Appreciation Society,** P. O. Box 63, Sunderland, SR1 1PN, UK

**The Doris Day Society,** 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX, UK

**The Deanna Durbin Society,** c/o Mrs. Jutta Fagan, 13 Mayfair Court, Mayfair Close, The Ave, Beckenham, Kent BR3 5EL, UK

**Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society,** c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email:tony@flias.globalnet.co.uk)

**The Dean Martin Association,** P. O. Box 80, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 1ZR, UK

**Andy Williams Appreciation Society,** P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

# Russ Columbo - "Prisoner of Love"

**Tony Toran has completed "Prisoner Of Love," a full-length biography of the singer, Russ Columbo, a contemporary and rival of Bing in the 1930s. The book is 674 pages and currently is being offered for publication. Toran is a veteran of the music field and a member of the American Federation of Musicians and ASCAP. A graduate of Columbia University, he resides in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and does consulting work in marketing and communications. He was interviewed recently by his friend, and ICC member, Norman Wolfe.**

**Question** - Why a book on Russ Columbo?

**Answer** - I felt a complete one never had been done. Most of what has been written has either been a short commentary or synopsis or a narrative, all with multiple factual errors. I began research in 1994 - although for five years I worked full time in the health care field and not full time on the book. I was not a collector. I knew of him but was not familiar with his work. I wanted to present an honest history of a performer where previously myths abounded. My book tells his life (warts and all). The times, associates and romances.

**Q** - How do you compare Columbo and Crosby?

**A** - Very similar voices. Crosby (in his early days) had more of a haunting sound. Columbo was smoother and more musical. Crosby was able to create his own persona, (playing himself). Columbo was groomed to interpret romantic leads. They had virtually the same range - Crosby perhaps an added bottom note - Columbo a note or two at the top. Columbo had been a musical sideman. He played violin, guitar, piano and accordion. It is very evident in his phrasing.

**Q** - Columbo was only 26 when he died. What would have happened to him had he lived?

**A** - He would have become a leading man in movie musicals, like Nelson Eddy, Alan Jones, Tony Martin. He had just signed a star's contract with Universal Pictures and a new recording pact with Brunswick Records. In addition, he was to star in a new, sponsored weekly program for NBC.

**Q** - His death was reported to be from an accident with an antique dueling pistol fired by a friend. Do you accept that?

**A** - No. I even have doubts about the weapon. The friend was a photographer named Lansing Brown. There was probably an argument and grappling for the gun. Brown died in 1962 at the age of 61. The Columbo family knew him well.

**Q** - Columbo has been dead more than 65 years. Were you able to find people who knew him?

**A** - Yes. About a dozen. I was also able to contact every member of his family but one. There is a niece, two nephews and grand nieces and nephews. I also spoke with the sister-in-law of Con Conrad (Columbo's manager) who knew Columbo well; Larry Morris, whose wife, Libby, was Columbo's secretary; Milton Drake, a lyricist ("Mairzy Doats") and two musicians who worked with Columbo.

**Q** - Of all the people you interviewed, who was most helpful?

**A** - Tony Martin, Sally Blaine and Rosemary Clooney. Martin and Ginny Simms were singing with Woody Herman's band in San Francisco when Columbo and Crosby were with Arnheim at the Grove. Herman and Martin would drive down to hear them. Martin idolized Columbo. Sally Blaine (Loretta Young's sister) dated Columbo for about six years and was at his bedside when he died. Clooney lived in a house Columbo had lived in and she thought he had been killed there. She told me she used to tell her children not to disturb his ghost. Bing also thought Russ had been killed there but, of course, he was killed at Lansing Brown's house.

**Q** - Columbo and Crosby recorded several of the same songs. How do you compare some of them?

**A** - 'Paradise' and 'Goodnight Sweetheart' are equal dependent upon subjective reaction. Columbo's 'Paradise' is more lyrical and subtle. On 'Goodnight Sweetheart', Crosby has more bite and is edgier. 'Blue Of The Night' has more of an open Crosby. Columbo is more romantic and finishes with a vocal flourish on the last word.

**Q** - What body of work has Columbo left us and is there any interest in him today?

**A** - There are five feature films, mostly available and 32 recordings, all available. I also have taped copies of parts of radio programs. There is a good deal of interest in him among aficionados, collectors and nostalgia buffs.

**Q** - There were many polls at the end of the century to rank its greatest pop singers, where would you place Columbo?

**A** - Between Crosby and Como

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So there you are, some interesting thoughts from Tony Toran. Our thanks to Norman Wolfe for interviewing Tony and submitting the article.

For those who would like to know more about Ruggerio Eugenio di Rudolpho Colombo (to give him his real name), go to the following Internet sites:

http://www.classicimages.com/1999/april99/columbo.html

http://www.russcolumbo.com/

*Russ Columbo in action.*

The press tried to make up a feud between Bing and Russ late in 1931 when they were on competing radio networks. The song "Crosby, Columbo and Vallee" came out around that time. Whilst there was no substance to the feud, it seems that the two men became distant for a while. Ray De O'Fan writing in the Los Angeles Examiner of September 25, 1933 said:

*Russ Columbo is planning an early return to the airways. He is planning it seriously, determinedly. And there's a reason.*

*Time was when Columbo roosted at the top of the ladder, a regular network feature. His baritone voice, quite pleasing to the ear, seemed due to carry him to great popularity. Suddenly Russ dropped off the air, with little or no explanation offered.*

*I was chatting with Columbo the other day on the movie lot (he's in pictures now) and for the first time got the explanation directly from him. But let Russ tell it.*

*"It was a case of bad handling all the way around. I was poorly managed, badly publicized. The men taking care of my affairs involved me in fights with the networks and sponsors. They turned down fat contracts for reasons I can't imagine.*

*"The publicity put out by my own men did not tend to build me up, but actually created a bad situation."*

*Here Columbo refers to what once was called "the battle of the baritones," meaning, of course, the rivalry between Russ Columbo and Bing Crosby. Russ says he never cared for the idea. It is a sore spot with him, and he declares that it actually caused friction between him and Crosby, where once they were the best of friends.*

*Columbo, in his return, wants to be known as a singer in his own right, and not to be constantly compared with Bing. That will be hard to erase, because, no matter how you look at it, there is a similarity. First of all, they are both baritones. Then, they seem to phrase their songs alike.*

*But their voices are so different today that you could tell them apart instantly. Crosby, of course, is now riding the crest of the wave and as far as I'm concerned will remain there. Columbo is starting afresh.*

*It wasn't so long ago that both were singing with Gus Arnheim.*

There was a happy ending to this particular story as Mr. Ray De O'Fan related in his column on October 11, 1933.

*Bing Crosby and Russ Columbo have buried the hatchet. Not, as you might surmise, in each other's skull, but in six feet of soil where the weapons of warfare were planted without ceremony. The "battle of the baritones" has ended and the boys have made up. They realize there is enough money, enough following for both and they will enjoy it.*

*It all happened when Columbo attended the christening of Crosby's young son last Sunday and of course "Ears" O'Fan was on the job, three feet away, when greetings were exchanged.*

*"Hello, Russ," came the hoarse, familiar voice of Crosby.*

*"Hya, Bing," returned the good-looking Columbo.*

*They chatted for a few minutes until both paid respects to other guests. Of course I wanted a picture of that handshake but the powers insisted that the time was not ripe for photographs. Columbo was one of the last guests to leave.*

*Others lifted their eyebrows in amazement to see the two crooners talking together. Sam Coslow, himself one of the crooning troupe and one whose voice has a Crosby and Columbo twang, was stupefied. "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I'd never believe it," he said.*

*Throughout the afternoon, air buzzed with "Columbo's here." There was no sign of strained relations. In fact one of the Crosby contingent volunteered, "Everything is going to be alright between those fellows."*

*The story of their break dates back to the time when both were affiliated with Gus Arnheim. Later both bucked the portals in New York City and again they clashed. Those who know say that "advisors" whispered poisonous words into the ears of Bing and Russ.*

Russ died on September 2, 1934 and Bing was one of the pallbearers at his funeral. What do members think about Russ Columbo? Write and tell me.

**Malcolm Macfarlane**

# Books 'n' Bing

## 1. My Last Years With Bing

**by Kathryn Crosby**

It was intended that this new book would be published by Whitehall Printing in the USA on November 1. In the same format as our Honorary President's previous book, it covers each year chronologically 1966-77, with photos on one page, text on the opposite. There are 408 pages, the book measures 8 1/2" x 11", with over 200 photos, 98% of which will be in color. Greg Van Beek had a nice chat with the publisher who told him that Bing and Kathryn both kept daily diaries, and that Kathryn just referred back to those for the text. Bob Hope has again written the introductory remarks. We await the book with eager anticipation. Full details and a review in the next magazine.

## 2. Bing Crosby: Crooner of the Century

**by Richard Grudens**

ISBN 1-575279-248-6, perfect bound soft cover. $19.95 trade

Gwen Harvey gave us advance notice of this new book, which is also scheduled to be published in the USA in November. I knew nothing about the book so I put the details Gwen had given me on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum site and Jon Oye took up the challenge as he later reported

*"I just called the number you posted, and was able to speak for about ten minutes to the author himself, Richard Grudens. Richard will be speaking at the Hofstra conference on Bing & the Andrews Sisters. He has just finished his Bing book, and is going to submit the first draft to the printer tomorrow. He told me he had interviewed a number of people associated with Bing, including Bob Hope (about whom he has also written a book), Patty Andrews, Phil Crosby, Kathryn Crosby (who urged him to write the book), Rhonda Fleming and even Gloria Jean, Bing's co-star in If I Had My Way.*

*He said the book takes a different perspective than a typical biography, with a lot of quotes from Bing people, and that it would include some 125 photos. He also mentioned that the book would focus on Bing's career & professional achievements, rather than his personal life.*

*Mr. Grudens said he received a lot of cooperation from Kathryn Crosby, and when I mentioned she was coming out with a book of her own next year, he seemed surprised and said she had not mentioned this to him.*

*When I asked him what he thought of the Gary Giddins book, he said he had intentionally not read it yet, so as not to be influenced by it while working on his own Bing project. He plans to read it after his book is in print.*

*Sounds like a worthwhile - and unexpected - Bing book we can look forward to.*

Jon Oye"

Subsequently, I had a nice letter from Mr. Grudens confirming the information and stating that the book will be about 260 pages "and is a fan's book if there ever was one. I also try to dispel the myth that Bing was harsh on his kids. There will be works on his musical links like Whiteman, Lang, Bix, Trumbauer, Teagarden, Manone, the songwriters, the band leaders and the movies and the songs, as well as a family history with both marriages. There was no attempt to catalog songs since Wig Wiggins took good care of that department, except a list of favorites."

This is very good news and we hope to have a full review in our next issue. Richard Grudens is also the author of "The Spirit of Bob Hope" and "Jerry Vale: A Singer's Life". Please see the advert on page 22 for details of how to obtain this book. There is a slight change to the information in the advert as USA & Canadian ICC members can now obtain the book for the special price of $17 including postage from Edison & Kellogg. Credit cards are accepted. Mainland UK members can obtain the book from Gazelle Book Services Ltd., Falcon House, 4 Queen St., Lancaster LA1 1RN (phone: 01524 68765) for £17.50 plus £2.95 postage. Credit cards accepted. European and members from all other countries should contact their local bookstore quoting the title and ISBN number of the book.

## 3. Riding On A Blue Note

**Riding On A Blue Note - Jazz & American Pop** (published by Oxford University Press in 1981, ISBN 0-19-502835 -X)

I recently picked up a copy of this book at a second-hand store and found it very interesting reading. Checking with Gary Giddins if we could use extracts in BING, he replied "Yes, but please note that I wrote it when I was 28, and I've learned a thing or two since."

The book is largely based on articles Gary wrote for the *Village Voice* between 1973 and 1980. The first section covers singers such as Frank Sinatra (an excellent chapter!), Ethel Waters, Elvis Presley and of course Bing. The second section includes pieces on jazz greats such as Jack Teagarden, Count Basie, Charlie Parker and Duke Ellington. In the chapter about Otis Blackwell and Elvis, Gary writes:

> . . . Bing Crosby might have empathized with Presley, for they made similar leaps. True enough that Crosby chose omnipresent asexuality as his mature show-business persona, in contrast to Presley's omnipresent metasexuality. But Crosby was once the carousing, would-be jazz singer of the jazz age whose ultimate success came in delivering a "White Christmas" to every American turntable. For him, Presley's willingness to become Hollywood's teddy bear must have seemed inevitable; nor could he have been much surprised to learn of Presley's nonexistent personal relationship with Blackwell, as it somewhat parallels Crosby's rather aloof relationship with his black idols, Louis Armstrong and Ethel Waters. Jolson was palatable for about thirty years (1919-50), Crosby for about thirty-five (1926-60). By palatable, I mean capable of renewing their audiences generationally rather than depending on antiquarians. Presley had been a star for over twenty years when he died on August 16, 1977; it would have been interesting to see how far he could go in the long stretch.

The chapter on Bing is titled "Bing for the Millions" and was written in December 1976. It finishes thus:

> . . . It was simply impossible to dislike Bing Crosby. Just how irresistible Crosby could be was demonstrated at the rehearsal before his opening at the Uris. His ad libs, which I thought would turn up during the actual performance, were apparently genuine ad libs. Also, he did not display a performer's persona as distinguished from the image he presented offstage. . . He reminded me of a line in an old Carl Reiner-Mel Brooks routine about a pop singer, Fabiola, who says of his audience, "I am them, they are me, we are all singing, I have the mouth." He moved on a stage as though it was his living room. Everyone else was frantic. Son Harry was tuning his guitar, and Mom called him over to get his floor cue. Bing: "He's tuning his guitar." Kathryn (impatiently): "Well, you have to come here." Harry: "What color am I?" Kathryn: "Blue." Bing suddenly sang "Am I Blue?" .. . ahhh, Ethel Waters," he reminisced, then walked over to Hank Jones at the piano and asked, "Remember Buck and Bubbles?" He told a story about hearing John Bubbles sing "Am I Blue?"

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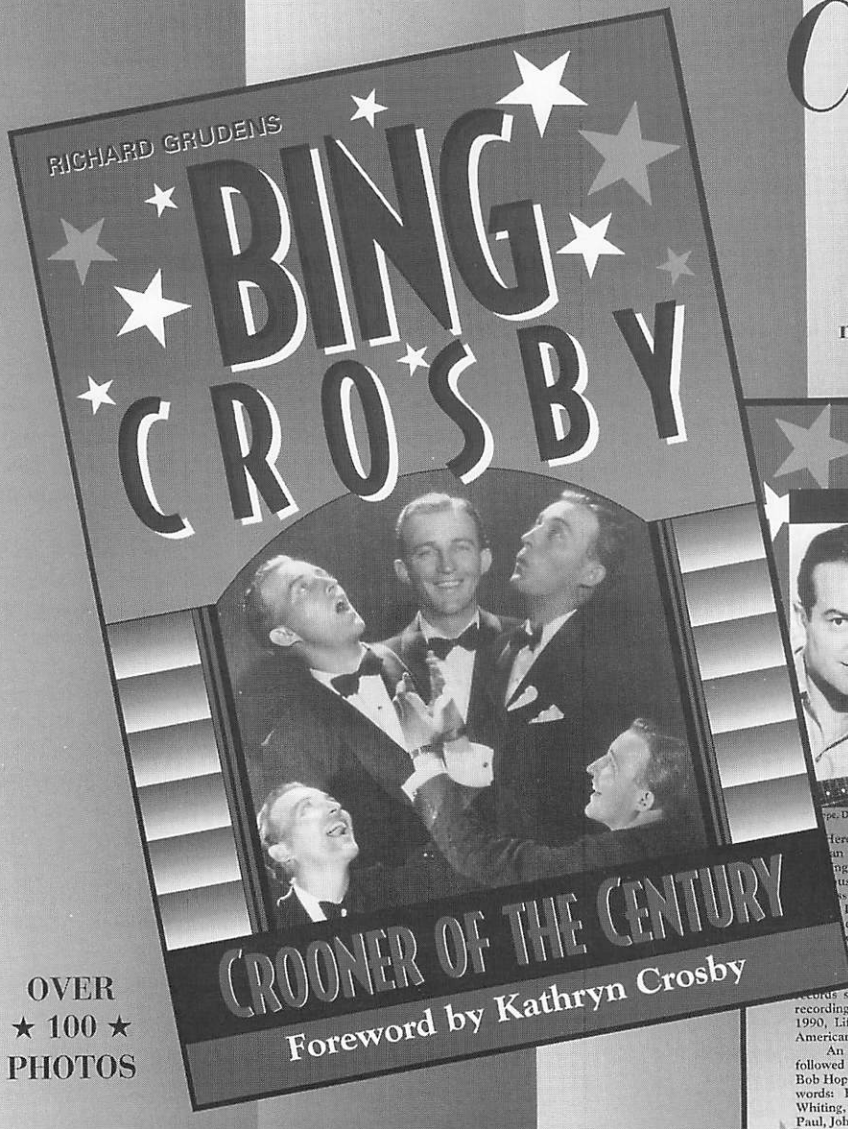
# BING CROSBY'S 100th *Centennial Tribute*

"Richard Grudens is the musical historian of our time!"
—Kathryn Crosby



ope, Dorothy Lamour and Bing Crosby.

Here is the quintessential Bing Crosby tribute from the pen of author / music
an Richard Grudens, documenting the story of Crosby's colorful life, family,
ngs, radio and television shows, and films; the amazing success story of a
us career that pioneered popular music spanning generations and inspiring
s followers: Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Perry Como, Jerry Vale, Dean
Don Cornell, Al Martino, Mel Tormé, Pat Boone, Elvis Presley, Paul
ey, Eddie Fisher, and Billy Eckstine, all who acknowledge their debt right
ween these covers.

's story is an all American chronicle of a generally shy show business giant
ordings and films kept America in perfect tune for many generations, and
mbers have never been equaled: 2,600 commercial recordings; 400 million
ecords sold; 396 single recordings; 38 Number one recordings; and best single
recording of all time, "White Christmas," charting 20 times between 1942-1962. In
1990, Life Magazine listed Bing Crosby as "One of Life's 100 Most Important
Americans of the 20th Century."

An inspirational introduction by his lovely wife, Kathryn Grant Crosby, is
followed by endearing, anecdotal accounts of those ubiquitous "Road" films with
Bob Hope, and detailed personal testimonials from show business icons in their own
words: Bob Hope, Frankie Laine, Rosemary Clooney, Rhonda Fleming, Margaret
Whiting, Connie Haines, Patty Andrews, Mary Martin, Jack Benny, Peggy Lee, Les
Paul, Johnny Mercer, Paul Whiteman, and little known accounts of the colorful Del
Mar Racetrack, Mack Sennett film shorts, Decca
recordings, and personal stories.

**$19.95**

This book is a "must read" for Crosby fans,
collectors, admirers, music lovers, and all
Americans who still cherish the music and anec-
dotes of the players involved in the Golden Age of
Popular Music written by the author of "The
Spirit of BOB HOPE" and "JERRY VALE — A
Singer's Life."

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The actual show was smooth but limp. The jokes were unworthy of him - the usual Bob Hope-type TV-gag witticisms that only a soundtrack can laugh at. Rosemary Clooney joined him for a sprightly "Slow Boat to China" - which proved to be the highlight of the evening - and then sang some old numbers well, though her high notes were strained. Crosby sat down to sing "Send in the Clowns," and his habitual detachment turned the song into an undistinguished croon. When Sinatra appeared at the Uris the previous year, it was the same song that enabled him to shuffle off his absurd posturing in favor of the lyric's irony. Crosby was just going through the motions - expertly, of course, but without the personal resonance that someone who knew him best from the pre-Decca recordings might have expected.

*Caption: Bing and Kathryn at the Uris*

After intermission, he introduced the Joey Bushkin Quartet with that ineffable number from High Society "Now You Has Jazz." Bushkin is a distinctively lyrical pianist - for a while Capitol tried to package him as a keyboard Bobby Hackett - but he had been away from the piano and sounded it; his chordal improvisations and arpeggiated flourishes were obvious and frivolous. Milt Hinton and Jake Hanna made a fine rhythm team, and it was nice to see the elusive guitarist Johnny Smith. . .

Finally, Crosby announced he would sing some old stuff (applause) and he fed everyone's nostalgia with nearly four dozen song excerpts in medley fashion, accompanied by the Bushkin quartet. The audience was hungry, applauding the first measure of every ditty, most of them rather ephemeral. Johnny Smith's obbligato was clever, and at one point his rippling through a series of minor chords caused Crosby to laugh in acknowledgment. On several songs, the audience joined in.

And why not? We weren't there to hear Bing Crosby the legendary singer, but to pay homage to the ultimate pop icon whose very presence gave cohesion to several generations of American feelings. He was not there to move us, but to remind us. He was us, and we were him, only he had the mouth.

(Gary Giddins, writing in his book *Riding On a Blue Note,* pages 19-21)

Some controversial views here and there? What do members think? Write and tell me.

The paperback version of Gary's book "Bing Crosby - A Pocketful of Dreams - The Early Years 1903 - 1940" is now in the shops and if you didn't pick up the hardback edition, you have a perfect Christmas present awaiting you! It's only $17.95

## 4. Just Williams: an autobiography

(Fontana 1987) - Kenneth Williams. First published by J. M. Dent 1985.

Our very literate correspondent, Michael Collins sent in an extract from this book by the British entertainer, Kenneth Williams and we have pleasure in reproducing this with thanks to the publisher.

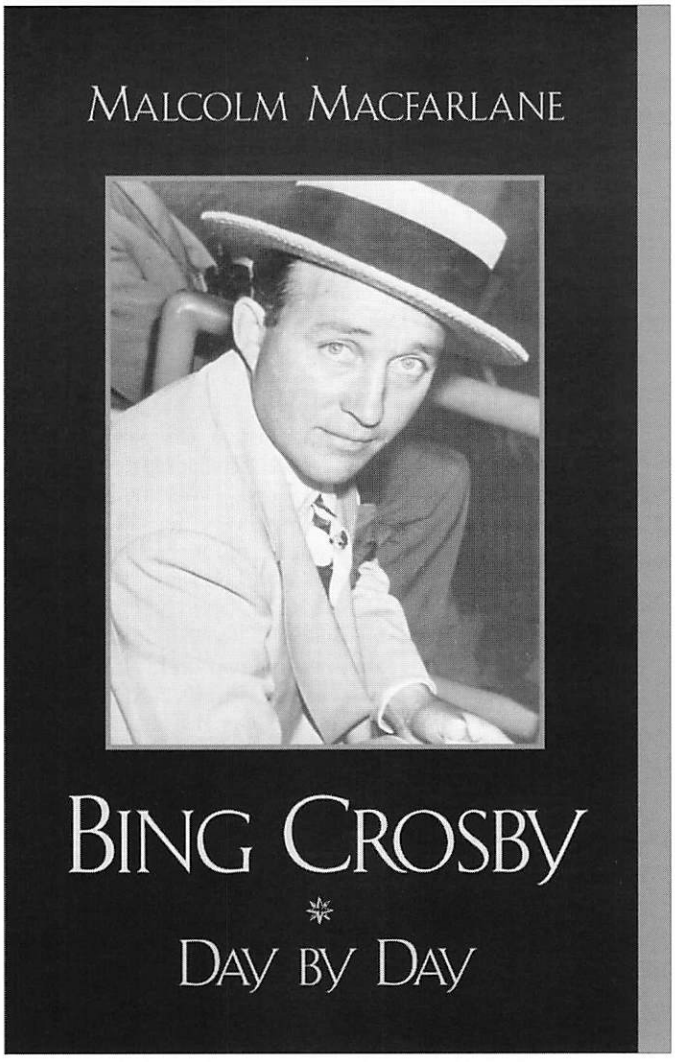
> Phil Silvers joined us and immediately launched into a long saga about Frank Sinatra.
>
> 'I was with him in one of the USO shows touring Italy and when we got to Rome he said we could drop in on the Pope. I said, "Don't be silly, Frank, you can't just drop in on the Pope. These things take some organizing". He said, "Shucks to that" and he could pull some strings with the Embassy, and sure enough the next day we were standing in the Sistine Chapel and this Cardinal ushered us in and said, "The Holy Father will see you now." In comes the Pope. "Well my son'" he says to Frank, "I know you are a very fine tenor," and Frank says, "No father, I'm not a tenor, I'm a baritone: everyone gets it wrong," and the Pope says, "I am sorry my son, I thought you were a tenor," then he turns to me and says, "But you, Mr Silvers, I know that you are a comedian", and I gave him a rundown on my early days in burlesque. It got a few laughs. He was cute. Then he asks me if there is anything he can do for me, and I showed him this rosary I've got in a tobacco tin and I said if he would bless it personally I could take it back to give to Bing Crosby and tell him that no one had touched it but the Pope. He said, "My son, I will do better than that." He turns to this acolyte and speaks in Italian and the next thing is he brings back six rosaries all in cellophane packets and stamped with the Vatican seal and he said, "Take these with my blessing to Mister Crosby and his family, my son," and I'm stammering, "Gee thanks Your Holiness 'cos I know Bing'll be over the moon when I tell him you have blessed them personally." Then we back away and leave, but when we're on the steps outside Frank hits me right in the solar plexus and it really winded me. I said, "What d'you hit me for?" And he said, "You bum! I get you an audience with the Pope and you plug Crosby!"'

## 5. Bing Crosby: Day by Day

I wasn't going to mention this but as Scarecrow Press have taken a paid advert in the magazine, it seems only fair to reproduce the following review of my book by Paul Holbrook which appeared in the April edition of a US magazine called *Big Reel.*

> "Sometimes big, major entertainment books appear quietly and never get the attention they would get - and deserve - if they were pitched to a mainstream audience. That came to mind when I first examined this one. This book won't get selected for any book clubs, show up in your local bookstore, or get reviewed in any major publication. It's not directed to a mainstream audience. Yet who was more mainstream than Bing Crosby? Few other stars of his era still have the fan base and lasting appeal that he does.
>
> More useful than a conventional biography, or any other book on Crosby that I've seen, *Bing Crosby: Day By Day* follows his life and career with more detail than has ever been provided in a single source. And it's due: such day-by-day biographical treatment has been given to

# The MAN and His MUSIC




This remarkable book details Bing Crosby's life, almost on a daily basis, and delivers a fascinating account of one of the most important show business figures of the 20th century. Through Bing and his interaction with most of the stars of the time, one can virtually trace the history of show business.

2001 | 856 pages | 0-8108-4145-2 | $85.00 cloth

## Features:

- Discography
- Contemporary reviews
- Fact file
- Index

*"...a book you won't be able to put down..."* —**IN TUNE INTERNATIONAL**

*"More useful than a conventional biography, or any other book on Crosby... follows his life and career with more detail than it has ever been provided in a single source."* —**BIG REEL**

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Elvis Presley *(Elvis: Day-by-Day.* by Lee Cotten) and Frank Sinatra *(Frank Sinatra: An American Legend,* by Nancy Sinatra). While Bing doesn't quite rank as high today as those two, his career was a long and influential one that still sells records and wins new fans all the time.

Author Malcolm Macfarlane. a retired bank manager and editor of the Crosby appreciation magazine *BING* since 1993, assesses Crosby from the perspective of today's culture and sadly acknowledges that Crosby is "the forgotten man of show business - a situation that could not be contemplated in the mid-1940s when he was probably the most famous man in the world. To put his impact into modern terms, just imagine that, say, Tom Hanks was also the top popular singer of today and in addition had a top rated weekly television show. You would then have some idea of Bing's fame and ubiquity during his peak years. However, nowadays, to those persons under the age of 25, Bing is simply the old man who sings with David Bowie in a Christmas video shown on MTV each year."

On hand while J. Roger Osterholm was compiling data for his *Bing Crosby: A Bio-Bibliography* (Greenwood Press, 1994). Macfarlane became enthralled with the chronology Osterholm was adding and decided to expand upon it. He chronicles Crosby's entire career with great precision, noting Crosby's creative output along with his dark personal problems. All the segments of Crosby's personal and professional lives are captured as they unfolded, unlike in a conventional narrative which has to stay focused on one area at a time.

Particularly interesting is an appendix described as the Bing Crosby Information File. This is where to look for specific information about his hobbies, marriages, children, recordings, gold records, radio shows, films (short films, cameo appearances, etc.), television work, concerts and fan Web sites. A full chronological listing of his recordings completes the book.

For Crosby fans, the book is a must-have. It's nothing less than Bing's life, warts and all. It certainly has a place in any performing arts library.

**Paul Holbrook"**

The separate advert on page 24 gives full details of how to obtain the book in the USA & Canada and European members should contact:

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# PBS Documentary on Bing

As we went to press, we were contacted by Mary DeCesare, an independent producer working with KSPS-TV in Spokane, WA. She is working on a PBS documentary on the life and times of Bing with a focus on his impact on American culture. She and her film crew will be at Hofstra for all three days of the conference to sit in on panels and interview Bing experts, scholars and friends. This documentary will air in March and May of 2003 in the Northwest of the USA and it is anticipated that it will be picked up nationally after that time.

This is great news as we were becoming very concerned that there would not be any TV tributes in the USA on the occasion of Bing's centenary.

# DVD-A, SACD formats may KO CDs

For those of you who like to keep abreast of the latest technical developments, here's news from the Associated Press of the next musical formats likely to hit our pockets.

NEW YORK - Over the last couple of years, manufacturers and record companies have rolled out two new musical formats - DVD-Audio and Super Audio Compact Discs (SACDs) - that they hope will replace the CD.

"It's really getting rolling. The number of titles is increasing rapidly," says John Trickett, chairman of the 5.1 Entertainment Group, which has produced almost 100 DVD-Audio titles. SACDs and DVD-Audios, when coupled with the right speakers, sound superior to regular CDs. Parts of a recording that were buried in layers of music are now revealed, crystal clear.

Yet the new formats require an investment from consumers. While the new discs cost about the same as a CD, or a tad pricier - about $19 - you'd likely need to upgrade your entertainment system to hear their advantage. Both DVD-Audio and SACDs can hold several times the data contained on regular CDs. They are also multichannel (surround sound), instead of the two-channel (stereo) CDs. (Some SACDs are two-channel, made to enhance stereo sound.)

The sound of DVD-Audio is comparable to that of SACDs, and the format offers bonus features similar to DVD videos. Listeners might watch videos, for example, or sing along to lyrics that flash on the TV screen. DVD-Audio discs play in any DVD player. But to experience the 5.1 surround sound, an entertainment system consisting of five speakers and a subwoofer is needed. Costs have come down, but a bare-bones, no-name brand will cost at least $200.

Most SACDs can be played only in SACD players. Sony offers bargain SACD players that also play DVD videos for about $300.

**NEKESA MUMBI MOODY**
AP music writer - October 11, 2002

It's all mind blowing isn't it?

# Keith Parkinson's Celluloid Crosby

Two issues ago, I wrote about *Mr Music* (1950) and mentioned that the film suffered by being padded to achieve a running time just seven minutes short of two hours. The same might be said of *Riding High,* Bing's previous film. That ran for one minute less than *Mr Music.* Made in the spring and summer of 1949, it was a remake of director Frank Capra's 1934 film *Broadway Bill.* The earlier film was an hour and a half long. Considering the plot's pedigree, 90 minutes might seem excessive. It was, after all, an adaptation of Mark Hellinger's short story "On the nose". The basic scenario is that of a man risking his marriage and future on a racehorse and Robert Riskin adapted the story for the screen. I don't remember *Broadway Bill* having been shown on UK television. I would like to see it if only to compare it to the remake of fifteen years later and also to try to spot a blonde Lucille Ball who had a bit part as a telephone operator.

When Capra brought his Columbia success to the attention of Paramount as a vehicle for Bing, it needed customising to suit its new leading man. Riskin declined to work on the new script because the remuneration offered was inadequate. *Riding High* credited Melville Shavelson and Jack Rose as writers alongside Riskin. Shavelson had worked with Bob Hope and Rose was co-writer with Edmund Beloin on the story and screenplay of *Road to Rio* (1948) so both could handle lightweight dialogue. But there were other hands involved in the writing who received no on-screen credit. Both Barney Dean and Bill Morrow worked on Bing's dialogue. They were regular Crosby scripters and knew which lines seemed to suit the Crosby style of delivery. Frank Capra also contended he had a significant input into the finished screenplay. He appealed to the Screen Writers Guild for part writer credit but the Guild declined to support him.

Barney Balaban was the head of Paramount Pictures at the time of *Riding High.* He decreed that

*Coleen Gray and Clarence Muse help Bing with the recipe for a sunshine cake.*

no film from that studio should cost more than $2 million. Capra was told that the film should be shot in black and white, which enabled the studio to do a deal with Columbia Pictures, the studio that owned the rights of *Broadway Bill.* Columbia wanted the rights to *A Woman of Distinction* which was a Paramount property. A straight swap resulted and footage of *Broadway Bill* was also made available. This could then be spliced into *Riding High* to save location shooting. As it happened, that was an economy measure that backfired. On July 7th, 1949, within days of the completed film being readied for screening, a preview was arranged in a Huntington Park theatre. The audience laughed at the marrying of old and new racecourse footage and Capra ordered retakes. A unit was despatched to Tanforan Race Course in San Francisco, where *Broadway Bill* was shot. The film then sat on the shelf for a further nine months.

Capra's salary was $156,000 and Bing's $150,000. Bing's leading lady was Coleen Gray. *Riding High* was her sixth Hollywood film and she had not attained sufficient box-office clout to justify a high salary. One thing in her favour was that she was Bing's choice. Capra's was Joan Leslie. Neither were as well known to moviegoers as Bing's female co-stars from his three most recent films: Dorothy Lamour *(Road to Rio),* Rhonda Fleming *(A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court)* and Ann Blyth *(Top o' the Morning).* It is possible that there was a third contender. In a career article on Phyllis Calvert, the London born actress, it was alleged that it was illness that prevented her from taking the role of Alice Higgins. Paramount regarded the supporting cast as inexpensive players. They were familiar faces to regular cinemagoers but they never rose above taking on character roles. Ward Bond, William Demarest and Margaret Hamilton were perhaps the best known. Two short appearances by comedians Joe Frisco and Oliver Hardy did little to add to the film's final cost of $1,921,000. Added to that sum were the costs associated with publicity and distribution. The film's North American rentals brought in $2,350,000 which allowed the accountants to contend that the film made a loss. In terms of Bing's previous box office triumphs it was something of a flop, coming 28th in Variety's list of box-office winners of 1949.

This "on paper" loss gave Paramount a political advantage. They had a three picture deal with Capra. By the time box-office returns were in from *Riding High,* Capra's second film of the deal was in pre-production. That was *Here Comes the Groom,* which went before the cameras in the spring of 1951. *Riding High's* disappointing performance provided them with a reason not to proceed with a third film from Capra. It turned out that the accountants could also declare that *Here Comes the Groom* was a box office loser. Production cost was $2,117,000 against North American rentals of $2,550,000. The way in which Hollywood balance sheets were written required a film to recoup its cost within a very short time and overseas rentals were disregarded, particularly with profit sharing deals becoming increasingly common. Capra's disappointment at the performance of the 1951 Crosby film made him withdraw from film making for the next seven years. After *Riding High* was completed he was asked why he had moved away from making the "social conscious" pictures on which he had built his reputation. He said: "They (Paramount) want the surefire thing. They don't want to take a chance."

Most feature films provoke friction on the set. *Riding High* was no exception. Bing wanted Ernest Laszlo as cameraman. He had photographed *Road to Rio* two years earlier. But a clash of personalities ensued between Laszlo and Capra and the director replaced Laszlo with George Barnes. Thus the opening credits of *Riding High* list both Laszlo and Barnes as directors of photography. Barnes was then assigned to the next Capra/Crosby film *Here Comes the Groom.*

It was early in the film's production that Capra decided to film the movie's musical highlight. This was "Sunshine Cake", which benefited from being directly recorded on the sound stage. The usual technique was for the pre-recording of a song to be played back with the actors miming to it. This gave the actors freedom to move about but removed the spontaneity which gives the slight edge to live recordings. Compare the soundtrack version featuring Bing singing with Clarence Muse and Coleen Gray to the version he recorded three weeks later for Decca. That had the benefit of Victor Young's orchestra and trained vocalist Carole Richards duetting with Bing but lacked the immediateness of Bing accompanying himself with spoons and Clarence Muse playing guitar and using an empty box for a drum.

Critical reviews and audience appreciation are sometimes miles apart. *Riding High* provides a good example of these often extreme views. I'm not sure if Manny Farber was being complimentary in his review for "The Nation" when he wrote: "The movie drools democratic pride in Crosby's sugary relationship with his coloured stable boy." Leslie Halliwell, who usually enjoyed unpretentious film fare, found it "only moderate entertainment". And "The Radio Times Film and Video Guide", looking at it retrospectively, took a dig at Capra when it stated his career "wasn't riding high any more and it shows: see for example how he lets sentimentality take over when the horse dies". The better critical barometer is feedback from the theatre managers, who base their views on audience response. Grass

roots reaction from people who have paid a dollar at the box office seems a more honest assessment. Both "The Motion Picture Herald" and the "Hollywood Citizen News" ran regular reports headed "What the picture did for me". From the manager of the Idle Hour Theatre, Hardwick, Vermont, we learn, "Solid entertainment. A grand picture, which did slightly better than *Connecticut Yankee* did last year despite our recent box office slump." That was printed in the MPH in May of 1950. A month later the HCN carried this report from the manager of the Burley Theatre in Idaho: "This one was a good story, but didn't quite turn out to be what most people expected in a Crosby picture. Lots of comedy and the only time I ever saw a matinee full of kiddies yelling one second and absolutely quiet instantly thereafter. Did average business, with the final night the best."

Over twenty years on, Victor Scherle and William Turner Levy were researching the life of Frank Capra for a book on his films. Bing wrote to the authors from his Hillsborough, California, home about working on *Riding High*. These were his memories:

> *"You know when I learned that Paramount had secured Frank Capra to direct a picture I was going to be in, I was highly elated, because not only did I have a great respect for Frank and for the great work he had done in the past, but I knew him personally from around the golf club and was very fond of him. Making the picture was a joy. He's such a competent craftsman - knows his work so thoroughly and seems to create an air of amiability on the set that very few directors are able to achieve. He's the kind of director who instils confidence in an actor. You just put yourself in Frank's hands and do what he tells you, and it has got to come out all right. Certainly the most gratifying factor in my career has been the fact that I've been associated with great men and Frank Capra comes very high indeed on this list."*

The resultant book was published the year Bing died.

I find *Riding High* a typical later Crosby film. The songs are of a high standard. Burke and Van Heusen only wrote four for Bing to sing and on screen he only solos one of them. That was "Sure Thing", which is the film's strongest ballad. Bing sings it in the first reel and then he's joined by members of the cast for the other songs. There are two older songs utilised quite appropriately as the plot unfolds. Both are Crosby favourites that I never tire of playing. The first, "Camptown Races", is a Stephen Foster song Bing recorded in 1940 and sang on the Kraft Music Hall a couple of times. The other non Burke-Van Heusen number was recorded in 1947: "The Whiffenpoof Song". Bing liked that one well enough to slot it in to *Road to Bali* in 1953.

The plot of *Riding High* may be trite and overly sentimental but in the 21st century that makes it a refreshing novelty.

# THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

**MERKEL, UNA** (1903-1986) Actress. In *Road to Zanzibar* (1941) she was Julia Quimby, Dorothy Lamour's partner in conning Bing and Bob. It was a time of transition for this prolific character actor. During the 1920s she had been a stand-in for Lillian Gish. For most of the 1930s she had played the girl friend of the film's leading man, usually as a wisecracking dame. Then came the "aunt of the leading lady" roles before she finally graduated to playing mothers. She was never out of work for long but decided to retire when in her early sixties. Her last part on screen was in *Spinout* (1966), an Elvis Presley musical.

**MERMAN, ETHEL** [Ethel Zimmermann] (1908-1984) Singer/actress. She was prominent in Crosby films during the years when Bing was establishing himself as a strong box-office draw. Her first Bing picture was the 1934 *We're Not Dressing* when she was fourth billed as the fiancee of Leon Errol. The following year she appeared in *The Big Broadcast* of 1936, although she did not share any screentime with Bing. It was the year after that when they were teamed in the successful *Anything Goes*. Merman had already played the role of Reno Sweeney in this Cole Porter musical when it had a profitable run on Broadway in 1934. She sang the film's title song, a standard which Bing never got around to making in the recording studio. In fact, it took him twenty years to wax "You're the Top", the other main song hit from the film which Merman and Crosby duetted in *Anything Goes*. Merman's strident voice seemed tailor made for belting it out on stage in massive auditoriums and her film career was secondary to her main love of the musical theatre. She made a further nine movies before her death but only the musicals *Call Me Madam* (1953) and *There's No Business Like Showbusiness* (1954) did justice to her talent. She made several recordings for Decca which captured her personality surprisingly well. Unfortunately she was persuaded to record disco versions of some of her hits a few years before her death. With luck they will never be re-issued on CD.

**MERRY-GO-RUN-AROUND, THE** Song. The regular Crosby film writing team of Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen wrote this for *Road to Bali* (1952). It provided the film's only opportunity for the film's three leads (Crosby, Hope

*Bing and Ethel Merman in "Anything Goes".*

and Lamour) to sing together. The song is performed in a jungle sequence. A fairly lightweight ditty, Bing recorded if for Decca to tie in with the film's release. On disc Peggy Lee substituted for Dorothy Lamour.

**MERRY MACS, THE** American vocal group. Paramount was determined that the audience left the theatre humming, whistling and singing "Life is so Peculiar" after seeing *Mr. Music* (1950). Bing duets the Burke-Van Heusen song with first Peggy and then Groucho Marx. Before the latter performance the Merry Macs have a go. *Mr. Music* was to be the fifth and last film appearance of this close harmony quartet. They had backed Bing on a couple of 78 couplings in 1940 having started a successful recording career in the mid 1930s. The group was formed in 1931 by the brothers Joe, Ted and Judd McMichael when they were known as The Personality Trio. Their vocal appeal was enhanced when Cherry Mackay joined the group in 1934. It was then that they billed themselves as The Merry Macs. At the time *Mr. Music* was filmed only Ted and Judd McMichael remained of the original foursome. The group broke up in the 1950s.

**METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER** Film studio. Bing's work for M-G-M more or less topped and tailed his film career. His first link with the studio was *Going Hollywood* (1933) when the studio had a distribution agreement with Cosmopolitan Pictures. Cosmopolitan was bankrolled by William Randolph Hearst to ensure that his girl friend Marion Davies was cast in major Hollywood productions. A couple of years later Bing was to be seen in the M-G-M short *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove*. Like all of the major studios, M-G-M produced a series of short films to support its feature product. Star Night was from their "Colortone Musicals" series. In 1951 M-G-M released a film about baseball - *Angels in the Outfield*. It was about the Pittsburgh Pirates, a team in which Bing had a financial interest. Which is why Bing made a brief appearance as a ball game spectator. Blink and you miss him. And then came the big one: *High Society* (1956). That was followed a year later by the non-musical *Man on Fire*. There was an inconsequential appearance in the M-G-M/EMI release *Cancel My Reservation* in 1972, where Bing made a gag appearance as a favour to Bob Hope, the film's star. Finally, forty-one years after the lion first roared before Bing's name appeared on the credits, he was seen in *That's Entertainment* (1974) and *That's Entertainment II* (1976). In the first he was seen on the studio backlot introducing sequences from *Going Hollywood* and *High Society*. In the second, Fred Astaire introduced two further Crosby sequences from each film. Several books have been written about the most successful and most glamourous Hollywood studio during the film capital's hey day. The company was established in 1924 when three studios united. They were Metro (formed in 1915), Goldwyn (formed 1917) and Mayer (formed 1918). Bolted on to the studio was the extensive Loew's theatre chain. The studio hired Irving Thalberg as production chief and the M-G-M film factory became the most polished and prosperous film studio of the 1930s. The studio slogan "more stars than there are in the heavens" may not have been arithmetically correct but in those pre-Trades Descriptions Act days it seemed near to the truth. During the 1940s and 1950s M-G-M was the studio for lavish musicals. The post-war period saw a dip in fortunes for all the Hollywood studios. In 1952 U.S. government legislation forced the separation of the studio from its cinema chain. Television saw a reduction in cinema audiences and the roster of studio stars diminished when contracts came up for renewal. Almost half a century after its formation two events occurred that were inconceivable during the studio's golden years. In 1970 the studio was bought by Kirk Kerkorian of Las Vegas. One of the first acts he instigated was the sale of hundreds of thousands of studio props. An auctioneer paid $1.5 million for the whole lot. He resold them to a nostalgic public for $12 million. The highest single bid achieved was $15,000 for Judy Garland's ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*. At the end of the 20th century M-G-M was in the ownership of a French bank. Its film library was in the hands of Ted Turner. He merged the M-G-M product with some early Warner Bros. and RKO features to give him control of well over 3,000 films and these are the mainstay of his successful movie channel. Turner Entertainment have also restored some splendid soundtracks. The days of M-G-M being Hollywood's prime studio are well in past but the studios legacy seems to be in good hands.

**MILADY** Song. Written by the team of Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen for *Mr. Music* (1950), it strikes me as unlikely that they composed it with Bing in mind. It was sung at the rehearsal of a student show early on in the film and it is subsequently reprised when the concert was ultimately staged. The vocalist remained uncredited. If it was intended to be regarded as a throwaway song of no lasting merit then isn't it odd that Decca teamed Bing and Dorothy Kirsten for a studio recording of the number? Bing usually managed to plug his latest recordings on his weekly radio show but "Milady" was never again given a Crosby outing after he preserved it on wax for Decca in April, 1950.

**MILESTONE, LEWIS** (1895-1980) Director. In 1935 Lewis Milestone directed Bing in *Anything Goes*. Although his career had peaked at the beginning of that decade with *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) and *The Front Page* (1931)

this was not obvious at the time. By the time he made *Anything Goes* he'd spent ten years directing and he had a further thirty years of directorial work ahead before retiring at the age of eighty. By then he'd sold himself short too frequently that he was directing episodes for several television series between big screen assignments. His most memorable post-Anything Goes work was *Of Mice and Men* (1939). Twenty years of indifferent work followed which resulted in a surprise when M-G-M hired him for the remake of *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962). It was a major disappointment. A couple of years previously he had directed *Oceans 11.* No doubt Sinatra found him the ideal puppet to allow the indisciplined Rat Pack to do as they liked and still turn out a box-office winner. Sadly, he was replaced by Terence Young during the shooting of what turned out to be his last film: *The Dirty Game* (1965).

**MILLAND, RAY** [Reginald Truscott-Jones] (1907-1986) Actor. In *We're Not Dressing* (1934), Milland was cast as "Prince" Michael Stofani. The inverted commas around Prince give the game away. He was an impostor who thought he had a better chance of winning the favours of Carole Lombard by pretending to be royalty. But cads never get the girl in films like *We're Not Dressing.* Milland also shared the cast list with Bing - but not screen time - in *Star Spangled Rhythm* (1942) and *Variety Girl* (1947). When Milland arrived in Hollywood from Wales in 1930 he was utilised as a lightweight leading actor in the Cary Grant mould. Fifteen years later he proved himself as a serious actor when he walked off with an Academy Award for his part as an alcoholic in *The Lost Weekend.* Unfortunately there were not enough weighty parts around for him to continue his serious roles and he was soon back to more routine pictures. To provide himself with a challenge he directed himself in five profitable but undistinguished films between 1954 and 1965. In the early 1960s director Roger Corman used him in some classy horror films after which it looked as though Milland's days of fame were over. Then he dispensed with the hairpiece that seemed to be a requirement in order to be taken seriously as a Hollywood leading man. Wigless, he played a substantial part in *Love Story* (1970). That extended his career by a further fifteen years, although he had to resort to a few made-for-tv movies in order to stay before the camera. If you haven't read his autobiography "Wide Eyed in Babylon" then seek out a copy if only to discover that he could match David Niven with light hearted Hollywood anecdotage.

**MILLER, DAVID** (1909-1992) Director. His first important directorial duty was *Top o' the Morning* (1949). He had been an editor and a director of short films until he made *Billy the Kid* in 1941. The following year he directed *Sunday Punch* and *Flying Tigers* before a seven year gap prior to working on his sole Bing film. He followed *Top o' the Morning* with *Love Happy,* a Marx Brothers comedy made when the team were past their peak. His work can be classified as uneven. Between run of the mill action films like *Saturday's Hero* (1951) and *Hammerhead* (1968) can be found such gems as *Lonely are the Brave* (1962) and *Captain Newman M.D.* (1963). But somehow he never built up a reputation for quality over a sustained period He retired to TV work in 1976 after filming *Bittersweet Love.*

**MISSISSIPPI** Film. Shot during the early months of 1935 and released in the late spring of that year, Mississippi is a seldom revived little gem. With a running time of an hour and a quarter it squeezed a good plot, four delightful Crosby ballads and some good comedy routines involving Bill Fields into a critical and box-office success. Studio recordings of the film's songs were made on February 21st., 1935 and I would be hard pressed to find another Decca session that could better the end result. Stephen Foster's "Swanee River" together with Rodgers and Hart's "It's Easy to Remember", "Down by the River" and "Soon" provide a quartet of ballads which provide as much listening pleasure today as when they were issued on 78s to tie in with the film's release. The plot derives from Booth Tarkington's play "Magnolia". It was adapted as a silent movie in 1924 under the title *The Fighting Coward* starring Buddy Rogers and five years later it became a starring vehicle for Wallace Beery with the title *River of Romance.* Then Paramount had the good idea of using it as the basis for a musical to launch its new contract star Bing Crosby. The part of the riverboat commodore had been pencilled in for Lanny Ross before W. C. Fields was perfectly cast in the role. The story opens with Gail Patrick playing Bing's girlfriend. When Bing refuses to duel over her, her sister, played by Joan Bennett decides that he is the man for her. Predictably the film ends with Bing and Joan planning to live happily ever after.

**Keith Parkinson**

# Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys

**Bob Achorn takes a look at Bing's early days and the other Rhythm Boys!**

As dedicated Crosby fans know, Bing spent much of four career-forming years as a member of the Rhythm Boys. That jazz-oriented trio was in business from 1927 to 1931. Paul Whiteman gets credit for creating the Rhythm Boys. Others, including Matty Malneck, claimed to have first heard the three of them sing together. Malneck supposedly sold his boss, Whiteman, on listening to them.

Whiteman, orchestra leader and impresario, was impressed. In April, 1927, he added Harry Barris to his large payroll, and teamed him with two of the band's regulars, Bing Crosby and Al Rinker. Whiteman put up the money; he deserves the credit for the creation. Bing, Al and Harry left Whiteman in the Spring of 1930. So that was the end of Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys? Not quite. The story is more complicated.

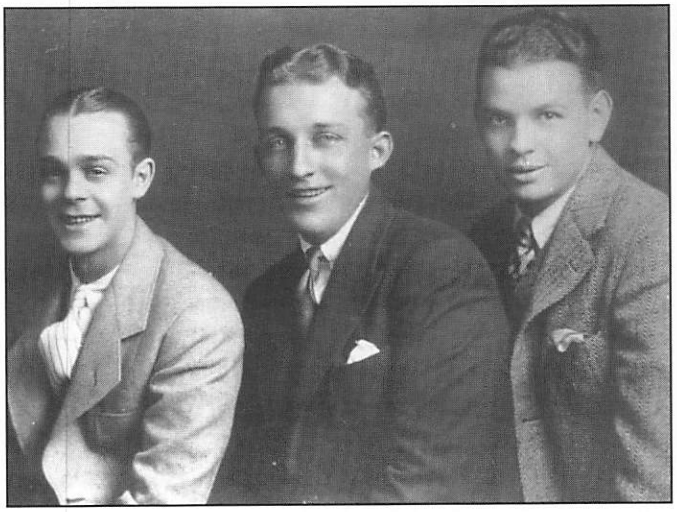
In the late 1920s and early '30s, Whiteman was the biggest name in popular music in the States. In those ricky-ticky days, few complained when he was portrayed by Universal Studios as the "King of Jazz," a film in which Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys — and Bing in particular — made an impact.

Whiteman was a genius at collecting talent, if not keeping it. Virtually all the great (white) musicians played in his orchestra at one point or another. He used some black musical talent, too, but behind the scenes. He was an indefatigable promoter of himself and of his musical groups.

He attached his name to various groups of his musicians: Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra, . . . His Concert Orchestra, . . . His Swing Wing, . . . His Sax Societte and, of course, the trio he called "my Rhythm Boys.

The Bing - Harry - Al trio made their first recording with Whiteman on April 29, 1927 - fittingly titled "Side by Side." But they were simply a trio then. They were not credited on record, as Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys until June 27, when they cut their first hit, the joint recording of "Mississippi

Mud" and "I Left My Sugar Standing in the Rain." In the next three years, they created nearly 20 more numbers as Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys. But Paul also presided over more than a dozen records in which the trio participated, sometimes starred, without being credited as the Rhythm Boys. Whiteman's rationale for the distinction is not particularly clear.



*The original Rhythm Boys*

As a trio, Bing, Al and Harry lasted three years with Whiteman. By 1929, Bing's appeal as a solo performer was emerging, but he remained attached to Rinker and Barris, claiming that nobody wanted to listen to him alone. He may have half-believed that, but surely Al and Harry instinctively knew better.

When the Rhythm Boys broke up with Whiteman — either fired or ready to leave — they had to make a name change. They were required to drop Paul Whiteman's name from their billing — a significant loss in that era. On the record they cut with Duke Ellington, they were known simply as "Rhythm Boys." On their record with Gus Arnheim's orchestra, they were billed as "Three Rhythm Boys."

They did stage work, radio work and film work, using the Rhythm Boys name. They spent nine months at the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles with Gus Arnheim, until a contract dispute ended that. Unfortunately, there are few audio or video records of their engagements in those days, or of their earlier appearances in the Whiteman shows, along with the six months they spent on the variety circuit in 1928 and 1929. To know their style, their humour and the development of their talent, we are left with the recollections of those who saw them and with their limited number of recordings and film appearances.

By Spring, 1931, the breakup was coming. Bing was emerging as a major star, on records, and on radio and, soon, in film. When the trio worked together for one of the last times, in the 1931 short subject, "Humanette," some theatres — as noted by Malcolm Macfarlane — billed them as "Bing Crosby and his Rhythm Boys."

Bing soon signed a solo contract. In the second half of 1931, Harry and Al went their own ways, with limited impact (and, at least in Harry's case, with support from Bing.)

Contrary to some belief, that was not the end of Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys. For, in September, 1932, when Whiteman's hold on the American public was in danger of slipping a bit, he revived the concept — unfortunately, not with the same talent.

At that time, Bing was busy building his solo stardom. In May, 1932, with other Whiteman alumni, he cut in Chicago his fine jazz recording of "Some of These Days." In September of that year, he was in a studio in San Francisco to record what became an enormous hit, "Please." In between those two Crosby dates, on Aug. 9, 1932, a group billed as "Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys" piled into a New York studio and recorded six numbers. Victor released three of them. But Bing was not there for that recording date. Nor were Al and Harry. The new Rhythm Boys that Whiteman tried to sell to the public turned out to be a quartet: Ray Kulz, George MacDonald, Al Dary and Jimmy Noel. In addition to singing, they played instruments in the band. The best-known of the numbers they attempted was "Basin Street Blues," a jazz tune Bing was to record with Connie Boswell five years later. The extent to which Whiteman used the new Rhythm Boys in his personal appearances is unknown. In the event, Whiteman's revival effort failed. The magic of his name tied to the Rhythm Boys' name didn't work any longer.

The quartet would fade away. But first, six weeks after their original session, they returned to the recording studio to provide back-up for the great jazz singer, Red McKenzie, on a couple of numbers. McKenzie was famous in the 1920s for his Mound City Blues Blowers (Benny Goodman, Coleman Hawkins, Fats Waller, Eddie Condon, among others.) McKenzie was yet another of those jazz greats who passed briefly through the Whiteman orbit.

It's interesting to note that Matty Malneck, the arranger and viola player who claimed to have been present for the very first teaming of Bing, Al and Harry in 1927, directed Whiteman's group for the two Red McKenzie numbers. The well-respected Malneck later made more music with Bing in Crosby's solo years. Malneck and Whiteman had ill luck with the second set of Rhythm Boys. If the new group did other work of significance, I'm not aware of it. They certainly never had the musical impact of Bing, Harry and Al. No doubt the RBII quartet reflected a somewhat desperate effort by the King of Jazz to stir fresh enthusiasm among his followers.

Whiteman did persuade his genuine, original Rhythm Boys —Bing, Harry and Al — to get together for a radio broadcast with him in 1943. The years fell away; it was an excellent show. By then, Bing's enormous success — "the most famous voice in the world" — and the lesser careers of Barris and Rinker inevitably stirred tensions. But a listener might have thought the three had sung side by side for the past dozen years. The program revived the old days in a way that Whiteman's second round of Rhythm Boys certainly did not. If anyone at that broadcast (other than Whiteman) had even heard of that ill-starred 1932 quartet, nobody said a word about it. The King of Jazz would have been unhappy at the mention.

**Robert C. Achorn**

# One Sweet Letter From You

**Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue**

**Brian Henson,** Ilford, Essex, UK

Thanks very much for the latest BING which so far I've only briefly thumbed through - but I see I have several hours of interesting reading ahead of me. Receiving it has reminded me to send you copies of a couple of items that came my way recently.

Are you familiar with these two advertisements, and have they been used already in the magazine? They are copied from a booklet called *Celebrity Sell* containing 31 postcards depicting 1940s/1950s celebrity ads. There are only two featuring Bing - but the others include Julie Andrews, Doris Day, Judy Garland, Dean Martin, Liberace, Shirley Temple, and many other stars of music and the movies. The booklet costs £8.99 and it was published last year by Prion Books Ltd., Imperial Works, Perren Street, London NW5 3ED (www.prionbooks.com) from whom it is still available.

*(Editor: The first advert was the one for Remington Roll-A-Matic shavers which we used as the back cover of BING 109 and the other, which we reproduce below, was used as the back cover by BINGANG in July 1995. Sounds like a nice booklet and our thanks to Brian for telling us about it.)*

"Here's how We Remember!
Bing Crosby
—and do we love it! Dorothy
Whitman's Sampler
BING: A Whitman's Sampler! When it comes to remembering a woman, it's so right!
BOB: Yeah! But when it comes to remembering Dottie, it's sarong!
DOTTIE: Boys, boys! Never mind the banter. Just keep those Whitman's Samplers coming!
Another great "ROAD" picture!
BING CROSBY BOB HOPE
DOROTHY LAMOUR
starring in
"ROAD TO BALI"
A Paramount Picture
Color by Technicolor
Why don't you send one today!
A WOMAN NEVER FORGETS THE MAN WHO REMEMBERS

**Ken Merry,** Doncaster, South Yorkshire, UK

Rosie Clooney was of that elite of songstresses and she has delighted our listening for a long time. Although the warm entity that was Rosie has faded into regions high and final the images of her and her voice remain with us to keep us warm. She was always generous in her praise of Bing who helped her to climb out of the abyss of hard times and dark despair. There was always a special rapport with Bing in their musical get-togethers. Anyone who has tapes of their broadcasts on U.S. radio in the 1950s will know of this. Their album *Fancy Meeting You Here* will always be a pleasure to listen to. The ad-libs are whimsical. I like the one of Bing's "When Elvis Presley bows, I just nod."

The piece on Billy Wilder in the last issue indicated what good films he made. His *Sabrina* and *Sunset Boulevard* are especially good. Some time ago on TV there was a programme on Billy Wilder's career. *The Emperor Waltz* with Bing was referred to and its limited commercial and artistic success. He indirectly indicated that it was the fault of Bing. Yet it was Billy Wilder's script and concept so the onus was on him. It did him no credit that he evaded the responsibility.

In the summer issue Johnny Mercer was given attention as he should be but snippets that filter through to enthusiasts like us about his personal demeanour suggest that he could be irascible. His poetic lyrics are a part of the fine songs he contributed to with the great songwriters. There are indications that he was not always supportive of Bing. Johnny Mercer was instrumental in starting Capitol Records. He said that Bing dominated the record scene and he wanted to provide other singers with opportunities. On a radio programme Jo Stafford said that Johnny could become abusive in drink. If in this state he offended some girl celebrity he would send flowers the next day. Jo Stafford called on Johnny once (there might have been a party?) and he was a little perverse. He wanted Jo to stay but she said that she did not want to receive flowers tomorrow and left.

When Johnny Mercer died Bing was performing at the Palladium and I remember his coming on at the end of a TV news programme (I forget whether it was BBC or ITV) and for several minutes he gave a eulogy on Johnny Mercer.

**Margaret Otway,** Conisborough, Doncaster, UK

The summer edition of BING No. 131 is

excellent and I always think with each edition that the team have surpassed themselves in their promotion of Bing, when the next edition arrives to prove me wrong. Credit to you all for your tireless efforts to keep Bing's legacy to all of us alive and well, no one could do the job better. Your efforts are appreciated more than you know and bring a great deal of happiness and satisfaction to many people to whom the magic of Bing Crosby would be lost if it weren't for those efforts.

I'm sorry it has taken me a long time to say this but the CD's by Gord Atkinson are remarkable and I can't wait for the next issue. He is such a natural presenter and the quality of the recordings made me feel I was in the room with Gord and Bing, they sound so intimate. Please convey my appreciation to him when you can and congratulate him on an extremely professional and well presented celebration of Bing's work. His admiration for Bing is evident and touching.

As for Bing on DVD, an excellent idea and one that I feel many people, not just ICC members, would be interested in. DVD's are the thing to have at the moment and it is a format that is becoming more and more accessible to many people. The Internet and CD ROM does have a limited audience and is not as widely used as people think. I say this because I work in a large office with a wide range of age groups and this a discussion I have often heard and it appears that there are lots of people who don't have an interest in the Internet for various reasons. Lack of interest, not cost effective, not enough spare time to devote to it etc. whereas DVD's are a more sociable medium, something you can do with family and friends. But I'm sure you will have many opinions on the subject. Good luck.

And last but not least, for I'm sure you must be busy, the ELVIS song. I heard the radio interview with the man whose idea it was, just before the song was released and his intentions had little to do with reviving Elvis and more to do with a safe bet for a No. 1. It would be sad for Bing to be used in such a way. Real talent doesn't need gimmicks, at least not for those who can see it.

**Alan Price,** Dinas Powys, Vale of Glamorgan, UK

This is about the possible issue of a Bing CD-R with many/all of his radio shows. I am strongly in favour, subject to some reservations. Turning to the choice of recording systems, MP3 seems to be leading the field at the moment, the nearest contender being DVD-Audio which is still only a prospect.

As you probably know, MP3 has various levels of compression. I would caution that, at the lowest level of 32KB/S, a lot of the quality could be lost. It might be safer to use a higher rate, say 96KB/S. This would reduce the running time of each disc but it might be the safe thing to do, unless a test could show otherwise. Much depends on the software in use.

Regarding music quality, I have considered doing a similar job myself from reel-to-reel tapes and cassettes but have recently discovered the painful truth that some of the tapes have deteriorated badly in the last 20 years and a few are unplayable. A new source of Bing material would solve this problem very neatly (if the quality is OK, of course!). Why not seek contributions from the membership, i.e. "who has Bing Radio shows and in what condition?" Some years ago, I was collecting Tony Hancock and The Goons. The societies for both compiled a library from members' tapes and it worked quite well. If each person with a computer could compile one or more MP3 discs, these could be centrally processed and made available to all. This would be better than each of us having to pay someone else for unknown quality stuff.

I hope that this scheme goes forward and I will be looking out for a mention of it in the next edition of the magazine.

*(Editor: Some good suggestions from Margaret and Alan. It is perhaps a suitable place for me to pass on a warning. In recent months, several concerns have been advertising CDs containing 80 or more of Bing's radio shows. These are in MP3 format and need special software to be able to play them in a Personal Computer. Although I do have a good number of Bing's radio shows on cassette, I was tempted to buy a 4-CD collection containing 361 of Bing's radio shows which was offered by a business called OTR TODAY. The price of $16.99 was incredibly cheap but as we know, "you get what you pay for."*

*The CDs came promptly with a nice friendly note from the proprietor, V. Henderson of Mabank, Texas, and they played easily on my PC. The CDs started with KMH shows of the 1940s and finished with a good number of the daily 15 minute show with Buddy Cole in the 1950s. However the listings of shows on disc 3 did not make sense when compared with the information in Lionel Pairpoint's marvellous book "And Here's Bing" and I waded through the shows one by one. Of the 97 shows on disc 3, most were wrongly described and more than 70 were already on disc ones and two. The quality of the shows in the set generally varied from quite good (where they had obviously been lifted from CDs) to completely unacceptable. Two shows did not include Bing in them at all. This could have been a superb collection of Bing's radio shows in a convenient form but was spoilt by a lack of care and judgement. I offered to help the proprietor tidy up the product in the interest of future purchasers if he would refund my purchase price but he did not wish to take up my offer. I was not sure whether OTR TODAY was a legitimate*

*business or simply a young computer enthusiast trying to make some pocket money.*

*You could argue that, irrespective of the faults, the collection is good value for money but there are other concerns who are doing a better job. So the message is, please exercise great care when purchasing this type of collection, especially if you are buying from OTR TODAY. )*

**John Bignell,** Wembley, Middlesex, UK

I have now played all the first 4 Gord Atkinson CDs. I thought they were excellent and would heartily recommend them to anyone who is interested in the complete saga of the Crosby years.

Also, I was VERY impressed with the gold tinted artwork on the discs - also the photos of Gord through the ages. He must have been "adopted" by Bing rather like Leslie Gaylor was over here.

Another splendid BING, Summer 2002. I thought a real highlight was on page 7 - the news about the replica Bing Crosby casket put on display by the Heritage Funeral Home in Spokane. And what distinguished Americans were similarly honoured and remembered prior to Bing! I can't believe the most fervent Bung admirer would complain about Bing being third in line to such revered and historical figures. Whoever is subsequently honoured we can take comfort and pride in the fact that our man is considered the third greatest American in history. I don't think I'm overstating the case, do you?

My friend Pat Forster reminds me that she has a memory of wartime that she would love to see confirmed. "I am sure that Winston Churchill arranged with the BBC to broadcast a daily short programme of Crosby records at a time when morale was low and we were in real danger of defeat" says Pat. She has never seen this memory confirmed in writing in all the years since but "I know I did not dream it." Any thoughts on how we can confirm this?

*(Editor: I can certainly recall reading about Winston Churchill's request for more Bing but can anyone give us chapter and verse?)*

**Ken Heason**, Carlton, Nottingham, UK.

I have recently visited the Midland Railway Centre at Butterley and Swanwick in Derbyshire. On the Swanwick site there is an old Methodist Church salvaged from the village of Westhouses. Inside the church is a book opened at a page dedicated to people who have helped with the project. Bing's name is on the page among others!

I wonder if any our Notts / Derbys readers know of the circumstances surrounding this?

*(Editor: It's amazing just how many ventures Bing helped financially. This one is a new one to us however. Anyone know any more?)*

# THE SPORTING SCENE

## THE PASSING YEARS

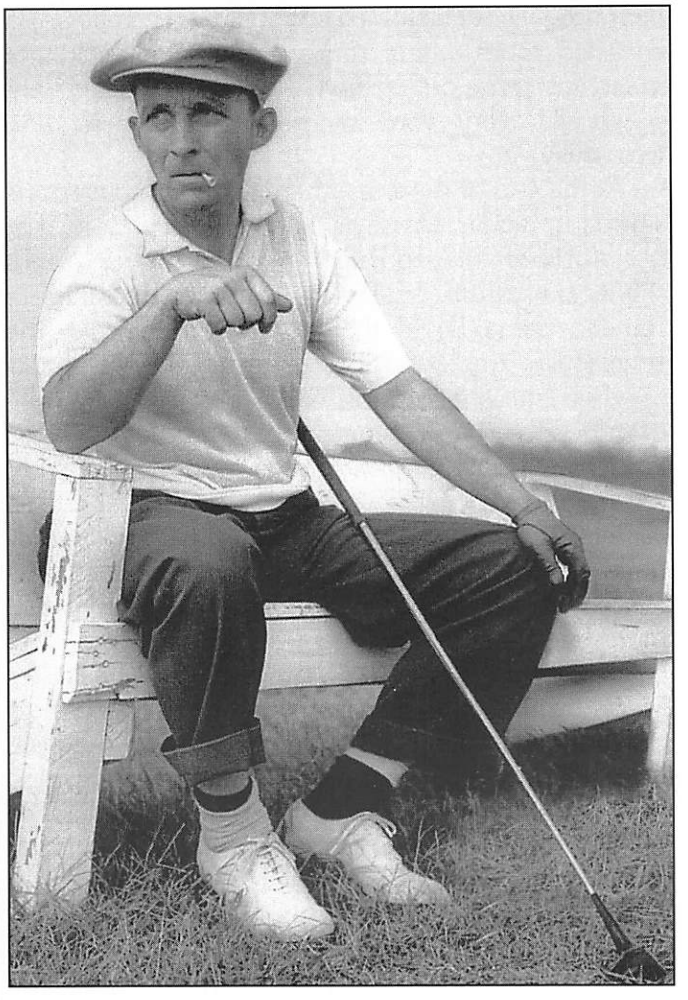
**With the AT & T Tournament due to be played at Pebble Beach in January, there will inevitably be many references in the media as to how Bing started the Pro-Am event off there in 1947. It does therefore give me an ideal opportunity to reproduce a very interesting article I have been sitting on for a while which appeared under the above heading in the *New Yorker* magazine in 1978. The writer, Herbert Warren Wind, was quite perceptive as you will read.**

Last October 14th, moments after finishing a well-played round at La Moraleja Golf Club, outside Madrid, Bing Crosby died of a heart attack. He was seventy-three. His death, which deeply affected his family and friends, not to mention the millions around the world who knew him through the motion pictures and recordings he had made over half a century, also greatly saddened the golfing community - for, of all contemporary public figures, he was the one most intimately identified with the game. I did not know Crosby well, but in January I was moved to make a sort of pilgrimage to the Monterey Peninsula, in California, to attend the annual Bing Crosby National Pro-Am, the tournament he founded back in 1937, which set the pattern for many tournaments that have been sponsored in recent years by other stars of the entertainment world. This year, everything at the Crosby, as it is generally called, was much as it has always been. There was, as usual, some terrible weather: On the night before the opening round, an inch and a half of rain fell on the already sopping courses, and, with several of the greens and fairways under water, the start of play had to be postponed a day. Most of the familiar faces - the celebrities, businessmen, and other amateurs who regularly team up with the professional golfer - were on hand, full of the spirit and enthusiasm that the event seems to generate. And, finally, the tournament itself was packed with excellent golf and high drama. At the end of the seventy-two holes, two of the most talented and appealing members of the new young professional band, Tom Watson and Ben Crenshaw, were tied for first at eight strokes under par. This called for a sudden-death playoff, and on the second extra hole Watson won out. It goes without saying that Bing was missed at every moment, and all the more because this was one of the best Crosbys ever. The tournament has apparently grown deep roots, and there seems to be no reason it should not go on and on.

There is no question that the prominent entertainers who over the last ten or fifteen years have become sponsors of tournaments on the rich P.G.A. tour are, with few exceptions, genuinely devoted to golf, but it is also unarguable that being connected with a nationally televised sports event watched by millions is a sizeable promotional asset.

Crosby's involvement came about quite differently. He was an outright pioneer. In 1937, when he inaugurated his tournament, at the Rancho Santa Fe course, near San Diego, the pro golf tour was comparatively small potatoes, but Bing Crosby was already firmly established as a national institution. What led him to set up his ProAm was his intense love of golf and the pleasure he derived from being in the company of crack professionals. For the first tournament, he invited sixty-eight pros (among them Henry Picard, Dutch Harrison, Sam Snead, Denny Shute, Olin Dutra, and Paul Runyan) and sixty-eight amateurs (among them such Hollywood figures as Richard Arlen, Guy Kibbee, Fred Astaire, Zeppo Marx, William Frawley, and Gregory La Cava). Scheduled as a two-day, thirty-six-hole event with a purse of three thousand dollars - which Crosby put up - it was washed out the first day by heavy rain. On the second day, Snead, who was just coming into his own, shot a 68; this won him the professional competition and first-prize money in the Pro-Am, making for a combined haul of $762.30, which wasn't bad in those days, when first-prize money in the United States Open was only a thousand dollars. The important thing was that everyone loved the informal atmosphere of the affair, during which the entire field gathered in the evening at Bing's nearby home, where a battery of cooks grilled steaks, and where the host led off the entertainment with a few songs. The Crosby became a regular fixture on the tour until, after 1942, like many other tournaments, it was discontinued for the duration of the war. During those first six Pro-Ams, Crosby, simply by the obvious pleasure he took in the company of the touring pros, helped to give them a position of much greater social respectability than they had previously held. It brought to mind how, just after the First World War, when golf pros were still regarded as hired help and were not allowed in clubhouses here, Walter Hagen had led the way in changing that situation. Before and after playing an exhibition or a tournament round, he would walk blandly into the clubhouse through the front door to dramatize his point that if a professional was good enough to associate with club members on the golf course he was good enough to associate with them off it as well.

One reason Crosby was so fond of golf was that he had discovered it at the age of twelve, when he started to caddie at the old Riverside Golf Club in Spokane, where he grew up. From then on, he was fascinated by the game. He played it periodically during his years at Gonzaga University, in that city, and much more often when he became a band vocalist, ending up with Paul Whiteman's orchestra as the lead singer of the Rhythm Boys - a marvellous group, which was as far ahead of its time as the band's cornettist Bix Beiderbecke. After the Whiteman band completed the motion picture "The King of Jazz," in 1930, Crosby decided to go out on his own, and settled in Los Angeles. In no time, he had his own coast-to-coast radio program and was making two or three movies a year. During this period, he developed his fine golf game. He joined the Lakeside Golf Club, to which many people in the film industry belonged, and, despite the rigors of his schedule, managed to play nine or eighteen holes several times a week. A well-co-ordinated man with a natural sense of timing, he got his handicap down to 2 and carried off the club championship five times. In 1940, he won a spot in the sectional qualifying round for the United States Amateur Championship, but failed to make the match-play rounds in the subsequent thirty-six-hole qualifying test held at Winged Foot, in Westchester, the scene of the championship. During the war, he played many exhibitions - as did his friend Bob Hope, himself a more than creditable golfer - to promote the sale of war bonds.



*Bing at Rancho Santa Fe.*

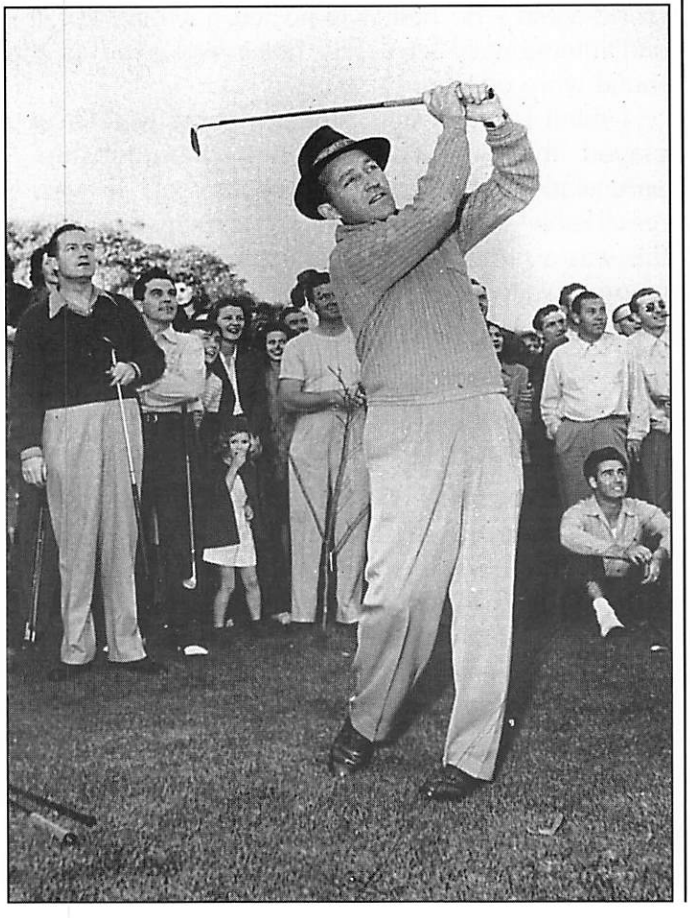
GOLF is a game that demands constant application, and during this stretch of his career hardly a day went by when Crosby didn't have a club in his hands. For example, he used to keep a bag of balls at the Paramount lot and, between scenes, practice chipping with a 7-iron on a small strip of lawn. I first saw him in action near the end of the war, when he was playing with some friends at Cypress Point, one of the courses on the Monterey Peninsula. Two things about that afternoon remain clear in my mind. First, I had long wondered whether Crosby was really as good a golfer as he was cracked up to be, and discovered that he was; he had a very legato, nicely grooved swing, and, while he wasn't particularly long, he hit crisp, straight shots down the fairway or toward the flag with the assurance of a man who knew exactly what he was doing. Second, I recall the astonishing way his voice travelled. You would be walking down an adjacent fairway, anywhere from a hundred to two hundred yards from his foursome, and, while you couldn't hear the three other players in his group talking at all or you caught what they said merely as an unintelligible mumble, Crosby's voice had such timbre that every word he spoke in an ordinary conversational tone carried like the peal of a bell, and he invariably sounded as if he were no more than forty feet away. I was told this past January by a friend of his that his hearing was equally exceptional, and that in a crowded room where the average man could not make any sense out of the babble Crosby could hear practically every word uttered and distinguish who was saying it.

At the end of the war, when golf and other sports started up again, Crosby made a brilliant move that transformed his tournament into a far more significant fixture. In 1947, he transferred it from Rancho Santa Fe to the Monterey Peninsula, the spectacular tract of forest and seashore about a hundred miles south of San Francisco. And he extended the tournament to fifty-four holes, with the first eighteen played at Cypress Point, the second at the Monterey Peninsula Country Club, and the third at Pebble Beach. While the Country Club's layout is nothing special, the layouts of Cypress Point and Pebble Beach are indeed. Cypress Point, which measures less than 6,500 yards from the championship tees, was designed in 1928 by Alister MacKenzie - the Scottish architect who later collaborated with Bobby Jones on the Augusta National - and is loaded with original and charming golf holes. It is usually ranked by knowledgeable players with Hugh Wilson's Merion, outside Philadelphia, and Donald Ross's Seminole, north of Palm Beach, as in a class apart from the country's other medium-length courses. As for Pebble Beach, which was completed in 1919, it may well be the best golf course in the world. It was laid out by Jack Neville, an outstanding California amateur golfer, who had never built a course before and did very little golf-course architecture afterward. Nonetheless, at Pebble Beach, where he was given a breathtaking piece of terrain, including high, rocky headlands that plunge straight down into Carmel Bay, Neville came through with an absolutely inspired piece of work, taking full advantage of the natural assets. At present 6,815 yards long from the back tees, Pebble Beach has been lengthened very little and altered only in minor ways over the past sixty years. There are eight seaside holes, all of them magnificent challenges, and the inland holes possess subtle qualities that give the course the proper balance.

The move to the Monterey Peninsula, with its superior courses, gave a whole new dimension to the Crosby. It immediately gained a further distinction, and with time it grew more and more important. In 1958, the year it became one of the first tour tournaments to be nationally televised, its format was changed again: It became a seventy-two-hole tournament and on Sunday the pros who had made the cut and the fifty low pro-am teams all played the fourth round at Pebble Beach. (By this time, the starting field had been enlarged to a hundred and twenty professionals and a hundred and twenty amateurs, and the purse, which had been raised to ten thousand dollars in 1947, was up to fifty thousand. It is now two hundred and twenty-five thousand.) In 1967, there was another notable change: Spyglass Hill, a rugged layout designed by Robert Trent Jones and completed the previous year, replaced the Monterey Peninsula Country Club as the third course used in the tournament. Down through the years, the galleries, lured partly by the famous professionals but perhaps primarily by the chance to watch celebrities like Jack Lemmon and Robert Goulet execute their patented finesse shots, continued to increase. So did the size of the television audience. This was due in good measure to the fact that beginning in 1958, after he had stopped playing in the tournament, Crosby served as the principal commentator. In 1971, thanks unquestionably to its being broadcast directly after the Super Bowl and on the same network, the final round of the Crosby reached what is still a record audience for a golf telecast: It was watched in more than eleven and a half million homes.

Several times, as the tournament's popularity kept increasing, pressure was put on Crosby to change it from a proam to a straight seventy-two-hole stroke-play event for the touring pros. A tough man to budge once he had made up his mind, he would not hear of it. "Bing felt that amateurs are the backbone of the game," Bob Roos, of the San Francisco merchandising family, said not long ago. "He liked to have friends from all phases of business and all kinds of professions, and he wanted his

tournament to be an amalgam of top businessmen-particularly those who had contributed something to the game-along with championship-calibre golfers and a diversity of lively, interesting, socially compatible people." In recent years, several thousand players have applied annually for the hundred and sixty-eight invitations now extended to amateurs. From the start, Crosby personally selected those whom the invitations should go to - a task he found increasingly painful, since it meant turning down more and more friends. All in all, though, he loved the tournament. He was proud of the way it had taken hold, and liked to recall how in 1947 it had required a staff of only five, while thirty years later the general chairman, Dan Searle, needed six hundred volunteers to get the show done right. Crosby also took satisfaction in another aspect of its growth: The tournament, which made only nine thousand dollars in 1947, from the sale of tickets and programs, has now raised a total of approximately four million dollars for charity. Most of this has gone to youth centers and to needy students, through scholarship funds that have been made available to over ninety colleges and universities, in forty states. In this year's tournament program, alongside a picture of Crosby in a double-page spread - he is seen carrying four irons and a wood over his shoulder - the following statement by Bing appears: "If I were asked what single thing has given me the most gratification in my long and sometimes pedestrian career, I think I would have to say it is this tournament."



Because of their marathon hoked-up feud and the many movies they made together, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope were linked in the public mind as the closest of friends. They were decidedly good friends, but, like most stars of their magnitude, each really went his own way. They were men of extremely different natures. Hope is essentially what he appears to be - a happy, pleasant extrovert who can be funny without a script, loves to be funny, and, as a friend of his once put it, looks forward eagerly to breaking up the next washroom attendant with a few well-tested one-liners. Crosby was far more complicated. He was fundamentally a rather private person, and liked to spend quite a bit of time by himself, reading (something he did extensively), looking into his various interests, or simply thinking. This led some people to refer to him as a loner - a tag he resented, and with good reason, for, while there was a streak of shyness in him, he was at times the soul of gregariousness. As long as a person was bright or amusing or congenial, it mattered little to Crosby how wealthy or socially prominent he might be, and his friends included studio technicians, musicians, chauffeurs, horse trainers, and proprietors of bowling alleys. He had few truly intimate friends. One person he saw a good deal of was Basil Grillo, who over the last thirty years has served as the operating head of Bing Crosby Enterprises. Most people agree that probably the three men who knew him best were George Coleman, a wealthy oilman; Vic Bergeron, who started the Trader Vic restaurants; and Phil Harris, the orchestra leader, whom he met back in 1925. Besides being comfortable companions, these men were in a position to lead flexible existences - to get packed and go fishing, golfing, or whatever at short notice. This was something that Crosby appreciated. When there was work to be done, he was the complete professional - always prepared, always punctual - but during his free time he liked to do what he wanted to do when he wanted to do it. If a friend phoned Crosby at seven in the morning and suggested something that appealed to him, he was one of those men who would be ready to be picked up in fifteen minutes.

Unlike most people of his degree of celebrity, Crosby travelled without an entourage. When the spirit moved him, he liked to mingle with everyday people; he enjoyed them, and the rapport he could establish with them was heartening to him. Once, when he was in New York and wanted to go to the races at Aqueduct, instead of hiring a limousine or a taxi he took the subway. Another time, in the early nineteen-fifties, when he was in Paris and was wandering by himself along the Champs-Elysées on a balmy night, he sat down on a bench near the Rond-Point to enjoy the world, fell asleep, and was roused the next morning by a puzzled agent de

police. There was nothing singular about his working out with the Pittsburgh Pirates, a baseball team in which he had a financial interest - many owners derive pleasure from that - but it surprised me to learn that in the days when he had a ranch, in Elko, Nevada, he would get on a horse at seven in the morning and ride all day. The intense workout recharged him. If Crosby could be remote on occasion, he could also be extraordinarily thoughtful. One year when he went on safari in Africa with Virgil Sherrill, a New York businessman who had been a Crosby tournament regular for many years, and six other people, he busied himself in the evenings working out lyrics about the various members of the party and putting each set of lines to some familiar tune. On his return to the States, he hired a studio and a small hand, and then sent each of his companions a copy of the recording he put together.

Most of Crosby's friends agree that when he moved from the Los Angeles area to the residential community of Hillsborough, south of San Francisco, in 1963, a few years after his second marriage, to Kathryn Grant, the new locale suited him admirably. The move took him out of the old hubbub, except when he wanted a taste of it, and he was able to lead a quiet, orderly family life, as was his wish. A man who basically thrived on routine, he rose quite early in the morning, breakfasted, read the paper, answered his mail, and then called in his butler, Fisher - whom he had found in England - to discuss the schedule for the day. He played his golf at the nearby Burlingame Country Club, where he was treated, as he wanted to be, as just another member. A lot of his rounds were with his sons by his second marriage, Harry and Nathaniel, two pleasantly intelligent young men. Three years ago, when Harry was sixteen, Nathaniel thirteen, and Bing seventy, each played to a 9 handicap. Harry has since spent less time on golf and more on music. A good classical guitarist, he is now studying at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Nathaniel, who is tall and slim, decided at the age of eleven that he would like to become a golf professional, and now, at sixteen, that is still his goal. He has an unmistakable talent for the game, and plays to a 1 handicap. This year, he took his father's place as the sponsor of the Crosby, and though the pressure on him was unrelenting, performed equally and well. It is pleasant to know that the family wishes to continue the tournament.

As was generally appreciated, Crosby had an extremely good mind. He was fascinated by language and enjoyed concocting phrases that were out of the ordinary and had a little flick to them. He had a startlingly good memory. One friend has estimated that he knew twenty thousand or so people by name. Throughout his life, of course, he devoted a large portion of his time to sports - more, perhaps, than any other celebrity of our era. They were a source of both stimulation and relaxation. He did not sing very often just for the pleasure of singing, but when he was out on a golf course with old friends he would break into song, hardly aware that he was doing so, and, even more frequently, he would whistle his way down the fairways. He appeared to be just as honestly nonchalant as this when he played in the 1950 British Amateur Championship, on the Old Course at St. Andrews. The news that he would be appearing in the championship sent a wave of excitement through Scotland, a land in which he was a great favorite, and the morning that he teed off on his opening round, against J. K. Wilson, a carpenter from St. Andrews, dozens of buses and numberless private cars converged on that speck of eastern Fife, and approximately twenty thousand fans were soon packed along the borders of the course. Crosby did not let them down: He birdied two of the first three holes. I saw only the first birdie, and it was a beauty. The opening hole at St. Andrews is a drive-and-pitch par 4 only 374 yards long, but it is a ticklish proposition, because the green is set smack on the far side of the Swilken Burn, which twists across the fairway. After a good drive down the right side of the fairway, Crosby took what looked like a 7-iron and hit a very sweet pitch, which cleared the burn by a couple of yards and finished three feet from the pin. He eventually lost the match, 3 and 2, but I have an idea that he did not want to create such a crowd scene again - he hadn't expected anything like it - and intentionally let a few holes slip away as the round wore on.

I think I will always remember how well Crosby played the first hole of that championship - particularly that classic approach shot. It was a remarkable exhibition under the circumstances, but this was a rather remarkable man - a very nice man who gravitated to high standards and who kept on growing all his life.

**Herbert Warren Wind**

# The Crosby Pro-Am

**The *Executive Golfer* magazine carried a Crosby related article by Edward F. Pazdur under the heading The *Publisher's Page* in July. This follows on naturally from the last piece by Herbert Warren Wind and helps to clarify the reason for Bing's long-established golf tournament being removed from Pebble Beach. It also gives us hope that the tourney might be reactivated on the Crosby Estate in Rancho Santa Fe which we described in our last issue. We have pleasure in reproducing extracts from the article with grateful thanks**

**to Pazdur Publishing, Inc. & Executive Golfer Magazine.**

Today's AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am is an important tournament wherein portions are sadly turned into a shameless sham, laced with lamebrain comedy, by a few imbecilic celebrities.

Bing Crosby had a zest for life. He also had strong sentiments about golf. Bing strongly believed in the traditions of golf and its rules. He played the game by the book, behaved like a gentleman, respected his opponent, was a competitive purist - and loved every minute of it.

Bing was a show biz star of enormous magnitude. He was also a golfer good enough, with a scratch handicap, to compete in the U.S. and British Amateur Championships. He won 20 private club championships, and on average, played about 200 rounds per year. His son, Nathaniel, won the U.S. Amateur in 1981.

Bing cherished golf's traditions and enjoyed the camaraderie with golfers who shared his passion for the game. In fact, when his Bing Crosby National Pro-Am hit its peak at Pebble Beach and drew high television ratings, he was very selective about what celebrities were invited to play in the Clambake. Clowns put him off . . . he only invited stars who respected the game, its traditions, and its gallery.

No Nitwits, No Dimwits Were Allowed

Bing's vision of his tournament was to harness celebrities with golf professionals as a form of dignified entertainment for the purpose of providing income for charity and touring golf professionals. He was the first celebrity to give his name to a golf tournament. It was soon nicknamed Bing's Clambake.

Clowning celebrities, like Bill Murray, would never have made the cut during Bing's watch, from 1937 until his death from a heart attack in 1977. Kathryn Crosby was thrust into the responsibility of continuing the tournament according to Bing's wishes and managed to do so with the help of family, friends, and the PGA Tour. The tournament prospered for the next eight years until 1985 when AT&T approached Kathryn about adding their corporate name to the tournament title and renaming it the AT&T Bing Crosby Pro-Am.

It rankled her. Kathryn felt the name change, along with a few other alterations AT&T proposed, did not protect Bing's concept nor his sensitivity about how the game should be played when pairing celebrities with touring pros.

They parted company.

That was 16 years ago. Kathryn moved the Clambake from Pebble Beach to the Bermuda Run Country Club near Winston-Salem, North Carolina. It enjoyed a successful run for 16 consecutive years until the final tournament was played in June of last year.

## How It All Began and Its Possible Future

In 1932, Bing maintained a residence and played golf at Rancho Santa Fe, California (near San Diego), where he ranched, kept a stable of race horses, and became involved with Pat O'Brien to build and maintain what is today's Del Mar Race Track near San Diego.

Because Paramount Pictures kept him busy making films in Hollywood, he found it necessary to acquire another residence in the Hollywood area and to join the Lakeside Country Club in North Hollywood, a celebrity hangout for stars like Dean Martin and Bob Hope.

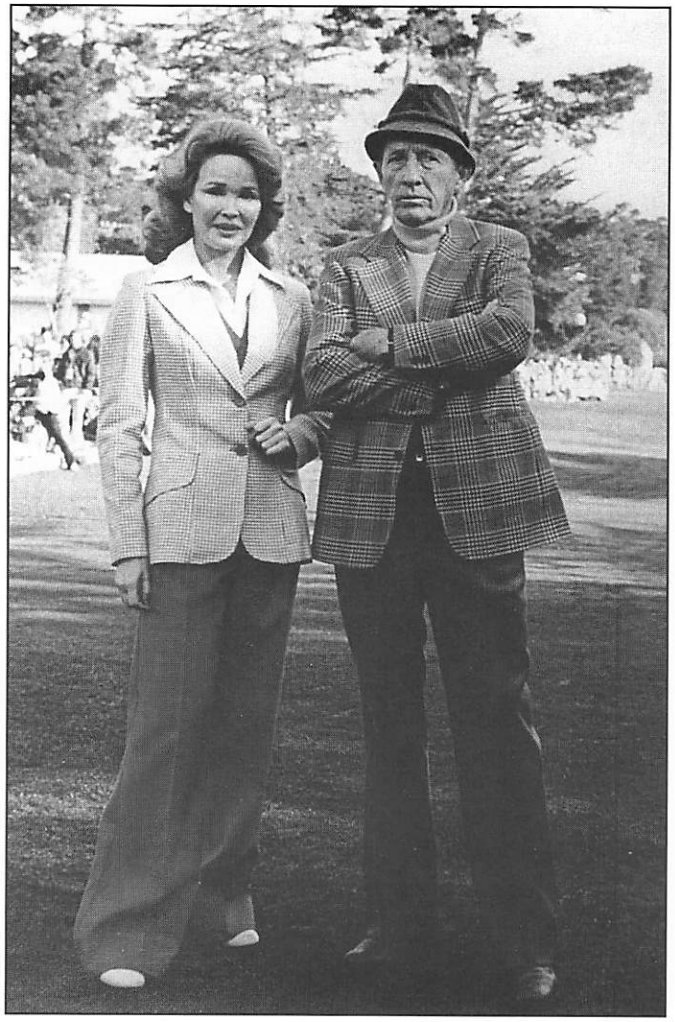
Bing played golf almost daily at Lakeside with head pro Harry Pezzullo. It was Pezzullo who planted the seed of a Bing Crosby Tournament in Bing's mind.

The idea was to financially benefit touring pros. They both felt great sympathy for the hardships endured by devoted and starving touring unknowns like Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, and Ben Hogan. Their fledgling pro tour was organized by their wives whose efforts greatly contributed to the future development of today's powerful PGA Tour corporation.

In the 1930s, Tour pros came all the way from Texas, North Carolina, and New England to play in shaky city-sponsored golf tournaments in western states. If a tournament was abandoned, they were stranded and left without enough money to get back home. They spent many nights in their cars.

Pezzullo talked Bing into organizing a tournament at Rancho Santa Fe to give these spirited pros a chance to win some pin money and bus fare home. The idea appealed to Bing and he launched his first Celebrity Pro-Am in 1937 at the Rancho Santa Fe Country Club with the added dimension of also benefitting charity.

Sam Snead, a kid still green behind the ears, full of spunk and fresh out of the backwoods of North Carolina, must have thought he struck gold by winning $500 at Crosby's first Clambake in 1937. The rest is history. The Clambake was cancelled in 1942 for the duration of World War II . . . resumed in 1947 at Pebble Beach (where Bing had a home off the 17th hole) . . . nationally televised broadcasts began in 1958 . . . and Bing died in 1977. Kathryn and the family guided it through the next eight years until their confrontation with AT&T and the PGA Tour in 1986. The encounter caused Kathryn to move the Clambake to North Carolina, where it thrived for 16 years until its final event in June of 2001. The Crosby Clambake has been placed on hold, at this point in time, after 65 years.



*Bing and Kathryn survey the progress of the tournament at Pebble Beach.*

## A Memorable Day at the Crosby Estate

I flew to Oakland and drove from the airport to Kathryn Crosby's 69-year-old French chateau-inspired residence, which is almost hidden from view on 12 acres in Hillsborough. Behind the house was originally a barn with stalls for up to 12 horses; a pasture; a swimming pool; and a small, oval riding track for exercising horses. On a knoll at the far end of the property was the gardener's home and a storage area.

Alan Fisher, who was butler for Princess Elizabeth before she became Queen of England, was Bing and Kathryn's butler. After Bing's death, Fisher returned to England and served Prince Charles and Princess Diana.

Kathryn made a five-hour drive from her ranch in Genoa, Nevada on the same morning of our appointment. She was already there when I arrived, on time, for our 1:00 p.m. appointment. I was greeted by her maid, Fumi Ishida, whom Kathryn refers to as her partner. Fumi led me into a large parlor where I waited for Kathryn.

A few moments later, Kathryn stepped into the parlor. She was what I expected - beautiful. She was tastefully attired in a blue tailored suit and her hair was chicly coiffed. She had a very disarming smile and unusually bright, sparkling eyes . . . you guessed it . . . I was impressed.

When Kathryn was a young 19-year-old studio contract player at Paramount and Columbia Pictures, she was brutally self-conscious. I scolded her for describing herself in her autobiography, *My Life With Bing*, as "having a round and chubby face that rather looked like a pie plate with a nose stuck in the middle of it." The fact was, like all studio starlets, she was pretty, young, sexy - and most importantly - tactful.

Fumi, seemingly right on cue, stepped into the parlor with a large tray of hot tea, china, and tasty homemade cookies. After tea, Kathryn had planned lunch for us at the Burlingame Country Club.

Chatting with Kathryn was easy. It was comfortable. Pleasant. She was a congenial, masterful host. It was not easy to break the spell and get down to business. Even today, 65 years after the inaugural Crosby Clambake at Rancho Santa Fe, the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am still evokes fond memories of Bing Crosby.

## AT&T and the PGA Tour Play Hardball

I had my tea, devoured the cookie, tried to look intellectual and asked: "Why did you break with Pebble Beach, AT&T, and the PGA Tour? The Crosby National Pro-Am was America's premier celebrity charity golf tournament, at the time, with national television and world-wide acclaim."

Kathryn sighed. She must have been asked that question a thousand times. But this time, 16 years after the skirmish, she seemed to welcome the opportunity to tell me about it.

"As you know, Ed, the early tournaments were losing propositions. There were no sponsors. Bing had to underwrite his tournaments. By the time Bing was gone, it was a very expensive proposition. Thankfully, Deane Beaman, who was PGA Tour Commissioner at the time, managed to line up sponsors, raise purses into the millions, and cut deals with television networks. Everyone benefitted. It was great," beamed Kathryn.

"So, what went wrong?"

Those bright, sparkling eyes at teatime narrowed. Her voice softened. She was recalling some painful experiences. "Bing's tournament was number one in television ratings. It was the best. Bing started it. The purses were booming. It was now a major and highly successful business enterprise. But, we still owned and controlled the tournament.

"However, we did not own Pebble Beach. Marvin Davis owned Pebble Beach at the time, and I suspected there was going to be some trouble. He called me and I asked him, 'what do we do?' He said,

'Well, you own the name and I own the course. Don't worry about it,'" said Kathryn.

"So, everything was under control."

"I thought so," she lamented. "I was traveling, doing a show, when I found out the PGA Tour and AT&T were going ahead with their own tournament titled AT&T Pebble Beach at Pebble Beach. I immediately called Marvin. He said it was a business decision!"

"I would say he double-crossed you."

"Evidently. But, in all fairness to him," said Kathryn, "he had been threatened that they would build another golf course in the area. He was not a golfer and couldn't know that no course in the area could match Pebble Beach."

"They threatened him. He caved in without discussing it with you first."

"Yes."

"That's highhanded. I'm surprised at Beaman."

"Well, that was their approach. It worked."

"Did you feel Davis let you down?"

"Mr. Davis was a businessman. And I'm not a businesswoman. Unfortunately, those things happen."

"Were you disappointed in him?"

"Well," she grimaced, "of course."

"You must have gotten a lot of offers from other venues around the country. The Clambake is a hot ticket."

"Yes, invitations came from all over the country - immediately. We went to the Bermuda Run Country Club in North Carolina for 16 great years. Sara Lee was a wonderful sponsor and we raised over $20 million for charity with fabulous celebrities - and no clowning."

It may yet all turn out for the best. "Yes, I was disappointed that we were not able to continue this year," said Kathryn. Her spirit lifted and the sparkle returned when she said: "I thought back to Bing's early days with the tournament's origin at Rancho Santa Fe. The first one there was called The Bing Crosby Amateur Pro. Bing had deep roots and a lot of friends in the Rancho Santa Fe and Del Mar area."

"Are you going to reactivate the Clambake at Rancho Santa Fe? That would be a grand idea!"

"I anticipate that will happen. They want it to happen. The course, designed by Fred Couples and Brian Curley, has been completed," she said, smiling.

## The Crosby National Golf Club

Developer Sam Robinson has a leg up on every golf community developer in America with the legacy of Bing Crosby in the Rancho Santa Fe / Del Mar area - and most of all - the potential of reactivating the Bing Crosby National Pro-Am where it all began!

The Crosby National Golf Club is the heart of The Crosby Estate at Rancho Santa Fe, a distinctive residential enclave of 722 acres offering 443 residences.

**Edward F. Pazdur**

*(Editor: Let's hope that the Crosby Pro-Am can be reactivated. Whilst still on the subject of golf. . .)*

# Peter Alliss publicises Bing

Renowned golfer and now golf commentator Peter Alliss worked with Bing on the BBC television programme International Pro-Celebrity Golf back in 1975 and 1976 and Peter had this to say about Bing in his book *Peter Alliss: An Autobiography.*

> How could one ever forget a week with the late Bing Crosby? At that time he was not too strong, frail, ageing. He was an entirely pleasant man, steeped of course in show business - he had quite the most astonishing wig I have ever seen which fitted sweet as a nut - but not one to talk much about it at all. He was a good conversationalist, enjoyed his life, loved the game of golf, loved the people he found in golf, loved going to Scotland. He enjoyed his Scotch and soda at the end of the day, and did every single thing smoothly and quietly. One thing he said which I cannot forget was that every single day of his life he tried to learn something - a new word, a new phrase, a new thought, a new fact. Just something about life. Pity more of us don't do just that.

ICC member Roger Addey is a keen golfer and he volunteered to try and interest various golf magazines in Bing's imminent centenary. He also wrote to Peter Alliss and it was very pleasing to read the following in the British *Guardian* newspaper of July 22.

> Like Richie Benaud and Motty, Alliss is now so pre-eminent, he has become less a commentator than a performer. At one point during the tense final round, he suddenly went off on a long digression about Bing Crosby. It is the centenary of the old crooner's birth next year, Alliss told us, before listing a bunch of events organised by the Crosby Society. Not strictly apropos the golf, perhaps, but typical of Alliss's keenness to support everybody and everything. Not for him the wearisome jingoism of other commentators, he views every player as equally in competition with the big enemy: the course. And seems just as thrilled when any of them overcome it.

Well done, Roger! We also asked Peter to write a letter about Bing for display at the Spokane event next May and he duly wrote a lovely note in praise of Bing.

Arising from this mention on TV, an old friend rejoined us - Eric Crowder, our publicity officer from the 1970s. He has had a long spell of ill-health but as he says "Once a Bing fan, always a Bing fan, and I'm very grateful to be back in touch." Eric is very impressed by our current magazine and he sent us a copy of one of the letters he had received from Bing which is dated December 16, 1975 and reads as follows:

*Dear Eric,*

*Thanks for your letter. Glad the meeting at the Hotel in Leeds turned out satisfactorily.*

*I went through Leeds, I believe, on my way up to Yorkshire for the grouse shoot. I like Yorkshire very much. I think there is some beautiful country up there, and the town of Harrogate is most attractive.*

*It's nice that Ken Barnes had the time and opportunity to come up and be the honored guest at the 25th anniversary celebration. He's a nice man, and very talented, too. Has very good taste. I enjoyed our summer in England this year, and all the appearances. Got to be rather routine though, so many radio interviews. They all ask the same question and I make the same answers so often that I kinda fall asleep!*

*Maybe the next time I come over there, they'll have some new questions.*

*I really sympathize with England — all the problems they're having with the economy, the Unions, the welfare situation, and now the bombing, but they've overcome worse problems than this, when you think of the Second World War and the Blitz and all, and I know they'll bounce back again.*

*My very best to you and all the members,*
*As Ever.*
*Bing*

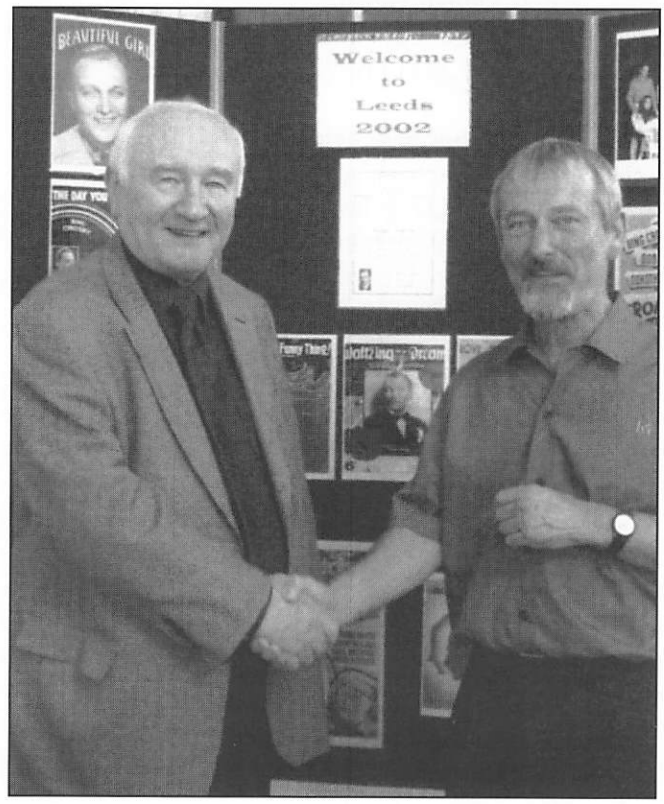
Well the UK overcame some of the problems but what a coincidence that Ken Barnes was the star turn at Leeds that year because that fits in perfectly with the next article.

# LEEDS 2002

October 6 was a bright day which almost seems to be the norm for our annual meeting at Leeds and your Editor and Lionel Pairpoint plus spouses were again able to have a picnic lunch in Roundhay Park before going in to the Mansion House Hotel. Host Michael Crampton opened the formal proceedings and greeted 44 members and their partners. This was the 37th annual meeting organised by Michael and he and Arnold Pope are the only ones to have attended them all.

Michael called for a few moments silence in memory of our members who had passed away during the year and he then highlighted the first attendance by Alf Ward and the return of Keith Richmond to the meeting for the first time in twenty years. Michael paid fulsome praise to the work of the ICC team and those present expressed their appreciation in the time honoured way. The 2003 calendar was on display and Michael thanked Ron Bosley for producing such a nice product. Wearing his treasurer's hat, Michael led a discussion about subscription levels and it was proposed from the floor that all subs should be increased by £2 per annum with the exception of the USA and Canadian dues which were to be left unchanged. With printing costs and postage charges rising, this increase should enable us to maintain the club's funds at a prudent level.

The forthcoming merger with Club Crosby was welcomed and Michael then handed over to your Editor who gave details of the planned Centenary celebrations which are also described elsewhere in this edition of the magazine. The huge debt we owe to Judy Schmid in connection with both the 25th. anniversary and the centennial was highlighted and warmly appreciated by the audience.




*Michael Crampton thanks Ken Barnes for his great presentations.*

After the showing of a video of some of Bing's film performances, Ken Barnes, who has done so much to promote Bing over the years, was introduced and proceeded to entertain the audience for the next hour. Ken talked about his time in the recording studio with Bing saying that our man was the easiest to work with of the many stars Ken had produced. He told of how Bing arrived at Chappells Studios in London in 1975 and was shown the empty studio by John Timperley, the Recording Engineer. Bing snapped his fingers for effect and commented on the nice acoustics. When John showed him the recording booth from which it was intended he should work, Bing stated that he had not flown 5000 miles to stand in a booth and that he could have sung to tracks back in San Francisco if he had wished. He wanted to stand close to the rhythm

section instead of being inside the booth. Timperley said that the brass in particular could get awfully loud which caused Bing to respond "Well, I'll get louder." So it came to pass that Bing got his own way. Ken Barnes said that singers such as Tom Jones and Shirley Bassey had to work from booths but that somehow Bing's voice managed to cut through the backing sounds very effectively.

In talking about working with Bing and Fred Astaire, Ken related how Fred had come across Gary Crosby shortly after Gary's dreadful book had been published. Fred made a point of complaining to Gary about it and asked him how he could possibly have written those things. Gary's response was "I've got a book to sell."

One of the songs on the Crosby / Astaire album was "Top Billing" and Ken explained how the billing on the record was an issue to the respective singers' representatives but not to the men themselves. Ken and Pete Moore wrote "Top Billing" to help get round the problem and Ken and UK singer Teddy Johnston had recorded a demo which had been sent to Bing and Fred for their approval. Ken had recently found the demo tape again and he played it for our amusement. The consensus was that Ken had quite a nice voice but we understand that he will not be giving up the day job! Ken played us some amusing sound bites from the Crosby / Astaire sessions which can also be heard on the CD collection "Fred Astaire - The Complete London Sessions."

In the studio, Bing was very relaxed and would happily sit and read a paper when technical problems delayed matters. He was genuinely an easy going person but that was not the whole man because he was also a businessman with many other interests. He could speak several languages and his ability to reproduce rare bird whistles was apparently highly regarded by those in the know. Bing could be mischievous on occasion and also very thoughtful and Ken related stories illustrating both of those facets.

Ken Barnes expressed the view that Bing was wrong not to stay with one record company after he broke with Decca. As a freelance, record companies were just not prepared to heavily promote any odd albums he might make for them. He should have done so much more as concept LPs came in. However Ken said that "Bing was not a grandstander" and that he preferred to keep a lower profile than other artists of the time.

Ken hopes that it might be possible to issue the "Seasons" album on CD next year. He is also looking at having a different record company issue the CDs of radio material he prepared for BMG a year or two back.

Ken's first session took us up nicely to the meal. Some commented that the standards of service and food at the Hotel seem to have slipped since last year and Michael will take this up with the management.

Immediately after the meal, Michael gave us a surprise item which was new to many present - extracts from the Kraft Music Hall broadcast of December 3, 1935 when Paul Whiteman introduced Bing. It really is amazing how long lost broadcasts like this can resurface after so many years and we all listened enthralled to the young Bing powerfully singing a medley of his early hits.

## The dreaded quiz

Arnold Pope then presented his quiz and as songs were played, we had to fill-in the answers on a pre-printed question sheet. For those of you who want to test their knowledge, here are the questions and we'll give the answers at the end of this report.

1. As "I Cross My Fingers" was played, we were asked to name the accompanying orchestra from a short list of three. Was it John Scott Trotter, Lyn Murray or Axel Stordahl?

2. Two songs were played, "Old Folks" and "A Blues Serenade". What year were they recorded?

3. Two versions of "Home On The Range" were played. How many years separate the two tracks? 6, 8 or 9? (Ignore the 1938 version).

4. "Fools Rush In" was played. Was this number, taken from a radio programme, ever recorded commercially by Bing?

5. A medley of three songs "De Camptown Races", "Cabin In The Cotton" and "Nell and I" was played. Name the odd one out.

6. "Sunshine Cake" was played. Name the girl singer.

7. A medley of three songs was played "With My Shillelagh Under My Arm", "Home Cookin'" and "But Beautiful". Were they played in chronological order (i.e. the earliest first as Bing recorded them)?

8. "All Through The Night" (the Welsh traditional ballad) was played and we were told that it was taken from a radio broadcast, but from which radio series? Woodbury, Philco or Kraft?

9. A medley of three songs was played - "When The White Azaleas Start Blooming", "Deep Purple" and "Blue Shadows and White Gardenias". What have these three numbers in common?

10. Trudy Erwin's duet with Bing of "Oh What A Beautiful Morning" was played. On how many strictly commercial recordings did she appear with Bing? 2, 3 or 5?

John Martin was the winner with nine out of ten and he was able to select from several prizes donated by members.

## Ken Barnes and DVDs

Ken Barnes then came back to talk about DVDs in general and his forthcoming new release of

*Holiday Inn* in particular. From a show of hands, it was apparent that only a few of those present had a DVD player so Ken demonstrated the advantages, first by showing the 20 minute short "Hollywood Victory Caravan" which is an extra on the newly issued DVD of *Road To Utopia.* This short tells the story of a girl trying to get to Washington DC on a train and Bing and Bob Hope agree to share a berth on the train to make room for her. Such a film would probably be banned now, but the scene in which they are sleeping together was very funny. Some of the other stars seen included Barbara Stanwyck, Alan Ladd, Carmen Cavallaro, Diana Lynn, Olga San Juan, Humphrey Bogart and Betty Hutton. I think the man seen with Bob Hope in one spot was Barney Dean. Bing sings "We've Got Another Bond To Buy" at the end. This short was new to most of us present.

This year is the 60th anniversary of "Holiday Inn" and Ken has prepared a Diamond Anniversary Edition for Universal. We give further details in the DVD section at the end of "Keeping Track" and Ken demonstrated some of the extras accompanying a digitally restored version of this classic Crosby film. He showed us two of the featurettes included with the DVD and the first of these was "All-Singing, All-Dancing" which looked at the history of dance numbers in movies. It was fascinating to see Bing and Fred Astaire miming to the playback of "I'll Capture Your Heart" with gaps left for Fred to put in his taps live. The second featurette was "A Couple of Song and Dance Men" in which Ken Barnes interviewed Ava Astaire McKenzie (Fred's daughter) and they discussed the careers of Bing and Fred. Ava came across as a lovely lady and in fact she was born the same year as *Holiday Inn* was first released. Many film extracts and still photographs were used as part of this interview with Bing being seen singing "So The Bluebirds and The Blackbirds" (from *King of Jazz*), "Auf Wiedersehn, My Dear" (from the Sennett short), "Dinah" (from *The Big Broadcast*) and many other songs from films such as We're Not *Dressing, Road To Singapore* and *Road To Morocco.* All in all, it was a fascinating featurette.

By now, it was close to 10 p.m. when we were required to vacate the premises and your Editor proposed a vote of thanks to Ken Barnes for entertaining us so well for so long. Michael bade us all farewell and so ended the last annual meeting of the International Crosby Circle. Next year we shall of course be the International Club Crosby.

**Malcolm Macfarlane**

*(Editor: The answers to the quiz were:*
*1. Axel Stordahl*
*2. 1938*
*3. 6*
*4. No.*
*5. "Cabin In The Cotton". The others were written by Stephen Foster.*
*6. Carole Richards.*
*7. No.*
*8. Kraft.*
*9. The song titles all include a colour.*
*10. 3. The song played plus "People Will Say We're In Love" and "C.U.B.A".)*

# Bert Bishop's
# BING ON THE BOX

Discounting walk on guest spots and minimal participation it would appear that, realistically, there are only about thirty Bing films we can hope to see on the small screen. Even among that number there are several that would create a certain amount of pleasurable surprise should their titles appear in the TV listings, which many of us scan in the hope of spotting some long disregarded gem. One such that featured on the UK Studio channel recently was *East Side Of Heaven,* with the same channel in the same week screening *Road To Singapore.*

Johnny Burke and James Monaco came up with four excellent songs for this story of a singing messenger who becomes embroiled in a messy divorce involving the custody of Baby Sandy, the grandson of C. Aubrey Smith playing the role of an irascible Cyrus Barrett.

C. Aubrey had one of those faces that always had a permanent look of someone who if not exactly disgruntled was far from being gruntled [a Wodehouse classic], and his determination to wrest the baby from the arms of his daughter-in-law forms the basis of this cinematic farce. Perhaps the most farcical aspect of the film was that little Sandy was, in fact, a baby girl in drag! Fred Reynolds informs us in his book *Road To Hollywood* that neither Bing nor the director, David Butler, knew of this amusing bit of gender bending until after the picture was completed. Which only goes to show that the nappy [diaper] changing sequence didn't actually happen. I'm sure that Bing, with four sons by then, would have been bound to have noticed a significant difference!

As a crooning cabby with Sunbeam Taxis, Bing had the opportunity to sing the second of a great

quartet of upbeat philosophical songs especially written for him by Burke and Monaco. The first has become the title of Gary Giddins wonderful biography. Here we have "Sing A Song Of Sunbeams", and just a year later "I Haven't Time To Be A Millionaire" and "Meet The Sun Halfway". Apart from the earlier Burke-Johnston composition, "Pennies from Heaven", these four numbers are quintessential Crosby dispensing cheerful geniality without any hint of romance. No doubt songs like these did a great deal to endear him even further to the listening public.

The "Hang Your Heart On A Hickory Limb" musical interlude at The Frying Pan Café was an enjoyable sequence enhanced by the inclusion of The Mice as backing group waitresses. Better known as The Music Maids from Kraft Music Hall, this personable and tuneful quintet should have been

*Bing with Joan Blondell and Mischa Auer in "East Side of Heaven"*

given greater exposure in other Crosby movies.

With a baby as the focal point of the film it was inevitable that a lullaby would feature, and with "That Sly Old Gentleman [From Featherbed Lane]" Bing had no trouble in doubling up as Mr. Sandman with a rendition that would have even softened the heart of old Cyrus himself. The film's title tune had all the elements of romantic idealism at a time when, in song, women and angels were synonymous. Bing singing it over the radio having won over his lady-love in a finale that saw Grandpa Cyrus appeased, the acrimonious split of Baby Sandy's parents magically healed and audiences heading for the exits suitably content. Would that such simplistic, heart warming films, with music to match, were still around the cinema circuits today!

In September, in the UK, the Biography Channel came up with a forty-five minute look at the remarkable career of Bob Hope. With Bob now half-way into his hundredth year we all pray that he reaches the magic ton next May, and in as reasonable good health as one could expect at such a great age. Being three weeks younger than Bing it was inevitable that Bob would hang a lot of jokes, at Bing's expense, on that particular peg. Produced and directed by Chris Hunt, much of their fictional

rivalry was featured in this apparently new biography which was narrated by Whoopi Goldberg with contributions from Michael Freedland, Les Brown, Anthony Quinn and a still well preserved Frances Langford - among others. With clips from a few of the Road films, and snippets of dialogue and duetting from radio and TV, Bing had more exposure on the programme than any other of Bob's career associates in this affectionate look at America's most endearing, and enduring, comedian. Though fans of the late George Burns may give me an argument on that one!

It was also very pleasing to see the excellent 1991 video *The Magic of Bing* Crosby transmitted on the Performance cable channel in the UK in October.

One of the problems for this column as the amalgamation of the two clubs proceeds will be ensuring that we fully review "Bing On the Box" in the USA. Perhaps one of our friends over there will be able to contribute a similar column featuring the Crosby scene on radio and TV in the States. There are several channels dedicated to vintage films, the most outstanding being TCM with Fox Movie Channel, Showtime, Encore and AMC not far behind. *Going My Way, The Bells Of St. Mary's, Robin And The 7 Hoods, High Time* and *A Connecticut Yankee* come up quite frequently on these channels. While on Actionmax *Stagecoach* has been given one or two airings. There is also the WE [Women's Entertainment] Channel which in screening *The Country Girl* gives some idea of the type of film their viewers are likely to want and see. Much the same sort of fare has been available in the UK, though mostly via satellite and cable with the latter's Studio Channel well to the fore.

The guest spot movies, mainly starring Hope of course, have also been plentiful, and *That's Entertainment* will always be an ongoing favourite on both sides of the pond. Also in the USA, the Bravo Channel repeated *A Profile Of Bing Crosby,* which was of course known to UK members as *The South Bank Show* production from December 1999. The dreadful *Mysteries And Scandals* was again repeated on E! and we considered this in more than enough depth when it was first transmitted in December 1998 to ensure that no further comment is needed now.

A few years ago Etty Gits, our Dutch distributor, very kindly made me a copy of *Angels In The Outfield.* In handing it to me she said "Don't blink or you'll miss Bing!" Almost true, for his contribution is scarcely more than thirty seconds. Bing sinks a fluky putt on the green and thanks his own celestial guardian in this whimsical story of a baseball coach whose character is transformed by an angel. Starring Paul Douglas and Psycho victim Janet Leigh, *Angels* has now been screened several times on Sky Movies 2 in the UK recently but it is strictly 'must have' material for collectors only.

*Bing in "Angels In The Outfield."*

*Road To Bali* was scheduled for a mid-October screening on Channel 4 in the UK but the horrific events around that time caused it to be withdrawn. Can it ever now be shown without a sense of unfeeling levity?

## USA RADIO

### WONDERS OF THE WEB

I'm well aware that there are a great many in the community, who don't have computers, who are fed up with seeing and hearing about the Internet on just about everything. But we have to try and move with the times as much as finances and inclination will allow. It's not that so long ago that I was resisting a CD player! So please bear with us all you good folk for whom this form of communication is not an option. Steam radio and TV will always form the greater part of this column!

However, it's nice to be able to report that various Bing shows such as Philco and Lux Radio Theater can be heard in entirety on www.wrvo.fm, as Judy Schmid informs us. Her email to the NPR Radio Station, just north of Syracuse NY certainly brought results. In posting this news on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum, Judy stated that she just wanted to share her excitement! If you can pick up any of these shows and record them the quality is going to be first class. Judy has also been interviewed on a local *Music Of Your Life* programme. Her talk about Bing, his family and his friendly rivalry with Hope and Sinatra formed the basis of her broadcast, along with the opportunity she had to see Bing on Broadway back in 1976. Bing's last recording, "Once In A While", for the BBC, was requested by a listener to her broadcast and she was able to supply the DJ with a copy that was played a number of times in the following week.

Greg Van Beek has also been extremely busy, with no less than five interviews on three different radio stations in the good old U.S. of A. Ronnie Paul's Flying Home programme has been chronicled in this column on previous occasions and Greg is still keeping the flag flying on what is mainly a big band showcase. An imaginative resort to some of Bing's singalong selection slotted in very well on WTKM's polka orientated programme. You may recall that there are a couple of German polka numbers among those medleys: "Du du liegst mir in Herzen" and "Ach du leiber Augustine". Two ditties that really caught the imagination of Greg's Hartford listeners.

But Greg's greatest scoop was getting interviewed on WOKY AM Stereo 920. It's a station for early morning commuters and has a huge listening audience out there in south western Wisconsin. "Straight Down The Middle" had lots of exposure all day, with "In The Cool, Cool Of The Evening, "True Love" and "Swinging On A Star" also featured

Many telephone calls ensued from both Judy and Greg's appearances, which just goes to show how a little effort can play a big part in bringing Bing back from his forgotten man image so prevalent today among much of the media generally.

National Public Radio in the USA has been running a six-part Morning Edition series on the influence of technology on popular music. The 2nd and 3rd instalments prominently featured our man in a positive light. The story's writer Rick Karr and Gary Giddins discussed Bing's importance in (a) being one of the first vocalists to understand and take advantage of the microphone as a new recording medium and (b) his championing of the new medium of tape for his radio show. Both shows did an excellent job in showing how important Bing was not just to the audience for popular entertainment but as a technological innovator. He even got credit as being one of the first Silicon Valley venture capitalist angels for his investment in Ampex.

Back in July, David Foe reported to the 'Museum' site that Eddie Hubbard had broadcast a mini-tribute to Bing on his ABC Stardust Network program. David commented "It was an excellent program and reminded me of the way Bing used to be presented when he was alive — almost with reverence, as the "king" of popular music." Another short tribute to Bing was heard on NPR (and worldwide over the Internet) on October 14 and this was capably put together by Harriet Baskas and included contributions by Kathryn Crosby, Gary Giddins and Stephanie Plowman (of Gonzaga). It is very nice to hear of this improved coverage in the land of Bing's birth.

# UK RADIO

## SAY IT WITH MUSIC - REVISITED

As our esteemed Editor mentioned last time around, BBC Radio2 on their website have set up an innovative system whereby if you miss your favourite programme you can access it later on the Internet. Desmond Carrington announced on his popular Sunday programme that *Say It With Music* can be listened to throughout the following week by logging on to *www.bbc.co.uk/radio2* and selecting Radio Player from the menu.

Two main themes were apparent on presenters' programmes in this round up. Rosemary Clooney's death and the Proper Box collection of four CDs. Apart from some Rosie solos, Desmond also played a track from each of Bing and Rosie's duet albums, "How About You!" and "The Daughter Of Molly Malone" which are very representative of their work together. Some interesting variety was apparent on Desmond's programmes with tracks as diverse as the very rarely heard "Teddy Bear's Picnic", and "Mister Booze" from the film which enrolled Bing as an Honorary member of The Ratpack. A somewhat dubious recognition akin to making Errol Flynn a fully paid up member of the Trappist Monks! Indeed, another presenter, David Jacobs, in playing "Style", was to say that Bing didn't seem to fit in as one of them either. He also believed that it was Dino who makes the parting shot on this track; but as we know it is Bing's voice we hear saying 'Come on, get some clothes on or we'll be late for breakfast'.

In playing "With My Shillelagh Under My Arm" Desmond was to discover that far from being a musical instrument, the only sound it was likely to give out was a dull thud as it cracked a few skulls here and there in Tipperary; while of the song "Cabaret" he remarked that Bing, at 72, 'If not the range, still had the same know-how.' Scotland based Mr. Carrington is one of the last remaining bastions of popular music, as we define it, on national radio in the United Kingdom. We need to support him as he supports us.

Later, on Sundays, Russell Davies kicks in with his likeable programme that treats his listeners as intelligent folk who surely want to know just a little bit more than the title/artiste/composer of any given song featured. On a visit to Northern Ireland composer Jimmy Kennedy related how his father in conversation with his aunt was looking out over a beautiful bay dotted with returning fishing boats as twilight descended. Their conversation went:

Mr. Kennedy Snr. 'That would make a great picture.'

Miss Kennedy. 'It would make a better song title.'

Which was how young Jimmy eventually came to compose "Red Sails In The Sunset". Needless to add it was Bing's voice blending with Victor Young's great accompaniment that illustrated the anecdote. If

you were asked to select in what year was Bing at his peak, vocally, which would you choose? 1933 has to be a strong contender among the Thirties aficionados, and from the 9th June that year Russell was to select a song which he believes is the grimmest number Bing ever recorded, and the grimmest pop song ever written. For that reason alone he was quite pleased to have the excuse for playing it! Can you guess? Of "I've Got To Pass Your House" he was to say: 'It has an honesty about it which is painful to hear, though I doubt that Bing was ever in better voice. The record didn't sell - but it was hardly "Straight Down The Middle"! ' was his parting shot. Bing's three other tracks that day equalled his performance of Lew Brown's melancholy musical drama, but only "Learn To Croon" is ever likely to find a place on a programme entitled Classics & Curiosities.

With some brief introductory recording chat that I have not heard before [Bing says the name Sam - 'Is this composer Sammy Fain?' asked Russell] the John Scott Trotter orchestra leads Bing into the 1944 track "I'll Be Seeing You" of which Mr. Davies said this composition has one of the greatest last eight bars of any popular song. Listen for yourself and you would be hard put not to agree. To further add to the presenter's knowledgeable credibility, if indeed it were needed, he related how Bing rescued "Home On The Range" from regional, folk song obscurity and made it into a hit record. Among several other Crosby tracks we also heard Perry Como singing "Rainbow On The River" which Russell used to illustrate Bing's influence on up and coming crooners of the late Thirties. He was to inform his listeners, though, that whereas Bing always did his own whistling the 24-year-old Perry had someone else trilling the introductory bars on this and other tracks, investigation of which establishes it to be one Elmo Tanner who starred above Perry on the Ted Weems radio show. This track was almost certainly taken from a very likeable Jasmine release of Perry's early years with that band leader which is well worth obtaining.

Russell put together a suitable tribute to Bing on his October 13 broadcast along 'forgotten man' lines and included "Blueberry Hill", the last duet of Bing and Satchmo, from the 1971 David Frost TV show amongst several other songs.

Elsewhere, the Bill and Angela Rennells' Kentish collaboration fills their programmes with an incredible amount of Crosby presented with a simplistic naivety that has a charm all of its own. Their tribute to Miss Clooney, with Bing, just had to be "True Love". It's that kind of a programme. So how remarkable to hear them play the soundtrack version of "Memphis Blues", from Geoff Milne's *Going Hollywood Vol.3.* The dialogue and general mayhem on this track had them and their in-house support totally bemused!

**OH! MR. PORTER**

Returning briefly to David Jacobs, a potted history of Cole Porter formed the basis of one of his programmes. In the telling, it was related how amputee Porter [he lost a leg in a riding accident] led a not dissimilar life to that of C. K. Dexter Haven of *Philadelphia Story / High Society* fame. His seemingly upper-crust lifestyle and dilettante approach to life, though, is an unfair dismissal of a composer who was extremely dedicated to his work. His incredible, mainly solo output, was a result of years of hard work and devotion to his craft. Perhaps, like Bing, he just made it look easy. "True Love", with Bing and the soon-to-be Princess de Monaco, was among the musical tributes played here. Incidentally, did Philip Barry, in his original play, ever reveal what names C. K. were the initials of?

In praising the Proper Box collection, which presents Bing from "I've Got The Girl" to "If I Were A Bell" on four CDs, David opened up the lid on this remarkable collection with Cole Porter's "I Love You", the hit song from Broadway's 1944 show *Mexican Hayride.* Bing does struggle a bit on this track and I would have thought with 99 to choose from Mr. Jacobs could have pulled out a plum about which there were absolutely no question marks. Why 99, why not 100?, he asked. Because the final CD has some tracks which run just that little bit longer and eighty minutes is the maximum playing time!

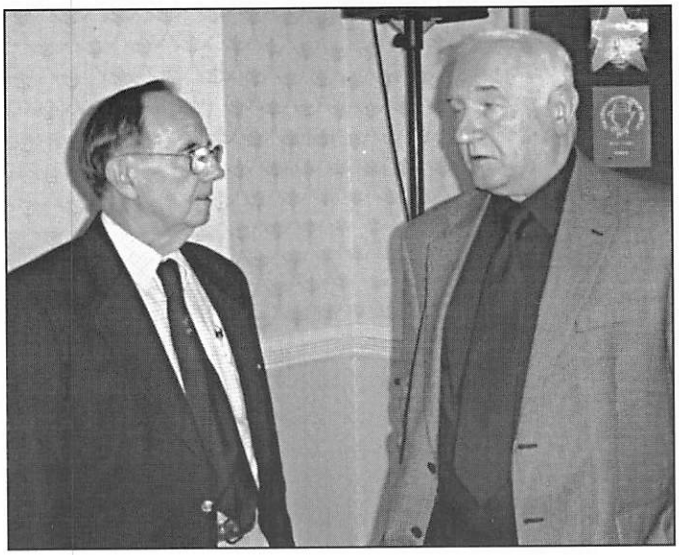
Now with John Richards *Magical Memories* there was no hesitation in starting right at the very beginning, and John introduced the collection with the track that Bing described himself and Al Rinker as sounding like The Chipmunks. In the past this early recording was always played too fast, but in more recent times the speed has been corrected and I think it's a really great, post ragtime number in the best Twenties music tradition. Anyway, thereafter, the BBC Radio Lincolnshire presenter started to work his way through the four CDs as the weeks passed, dipping in here and there as fancy took him. With all the Crosby albums that they are given by generous members of the ICC our radio hosts are spoilt for choice. There cannot be any other artiste with such infinite variety available to so many by so few.

**CRIBBING THE CLASSICS**

Throughout the popular music scene there has always been adaptations of classical works and themes. Some call it downright plagiarism, and had the composers been around when such popular tunes were published I'm sure there would have been some interesting court cases. However, there must be many instances where a tune has introduced a

listener to the source and expanded their musical horizons as a result. Chris Robinson exploits this musical larceny by classical music theme nights which allow for a few Bing tracks from time to time. Norwegian Composer Edward Grieg and Hungary's Franz Lehar under the spotlight are cases in point. With "I Love You [Here The Answer Lies]", "Strange Music" and "Yours Is My Heart Alone" the opportunity to present Mr. Crosby in more serious mode was too good to miss for Mr. Mystery Year. Of course Chris is not averse to presenting the flippant side of Bing as well, but many a ballad is to be heard among the air-shot badinage, and with the likes of "Sweet Sue", "Mon Coeur Est Un Violon" and "P.S. I Love You" it can be seen that the South & West of the BBC regions is well served with recorded Crosbyana.

Mentioning Grieg reminds me that member Michael Winspear asked me at the Leeds meeting: 'What was Bing's oldest tune, Bert?" From the twinkle in his eye I could see he was trying to catch me out! My Grieg / Lehar response met with a 'No, no, much older.' reply. In fact "Greensleeves" was the answer Michael was looking for. Both "A Home In The Meadow" and "What Child Is This" are set to this 16th. century tune, mentioned by Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives Of Windsor*". It has oftimes been apocryphally attributed to Henry VIII and as Flanders & Swann were to note in their *At the Drop Of A Hat* album; 'In every period play you go to see, set in 1300 up to 1715, for incidental music "Greensleeves" is always played; and the royalties go to Royalty!'



*Bert Bishop discusses a technical point with Ken Barnes at the Leeds meeting.*

In listening to request and dedication programmes one often wonders where the listener first heard of their choice. On David Lowe's request programme tracks such as "Oh, You Crazy Moon" and "Because Of You" - both from radio shows - and much less obvious commercial tracks like "At Last, At Last" and "Who Gave You The Roses?" are intriguing selections. One particular listener asked for a repeat of Bing and the Andrews Sisters performing "South Rampart Street Parade". But as David operates a six months rota the frustrated listener had to curb his patience. I find it quite strange that these people don't go out and buy what they want to hear if they're that desperate.

One can only assume that the obscure requests originate from a chance hearing. For example, what Cumbrian listener could resist asking for more of *Dick Tracy In b Flat* after Anne Hopper's substantial excerpt? Anne, along with Judith Ley and Christine Prentice form a distaff trio who are heavily into Bing and Rosemary Clooney. So, the latter's demise gave them excellent cause to delight their listeners with tracks from the globe trotting duo's two albums. Particularly as they are among the most requested recordings on their likeable programmes.

**JIMINY CRICKET!**

Thanks to Paul Barnes we learn that the creator of that Disney character was, in fact, Ward Kimball. Most members will be aware that Ward was the leading light and trombonist in the Firehouse Five + 2. His demise recently prompted Barnsey to present a tribute to the erstwhile animator and director of Disney films in the shape of "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone" - a title that in this instance was totally disregarded. Bing had Ward as a guest on his Chesterfield programme a couple of times, so their happy collaboration on this number, and four other tracks of like ilk, are still with us to enjoy. Sadly, a released album of theirs does not have the Bing tracks but the Giants Of Jazz CD 53095 has twenty-two tracks of the Firehouse Five + Two in great trad jazz form complete with occasional siren!

In playing the reject take of "Mr. Meadowlark", on which Johnny Mercer comes in late on the line 'Spoon and spark with meadowlark', Paul noted just how much merriment Bing and his fellow performers had on the many duets on which he was involved. Not just the fluffs, but released tracks too, where the performers' conviviality comes through, leaving Paul to suggest how wonderful to have had so much fun and get paid for it! Our own enjoyment in hearing these faux pas is due in no small measure to their enhanced availability on the Jonzo series. Paul is, of course, a great fan of Johnny Mercer as well as Bing and he included the lengthy medley Bing and Johnny performed on the Hollywood Palace in 1966 on one of his programmes.

Barnsey was also among those remembering the 25th anniversary of Bing's death around the 14th. Among a trio of tracks he kindly picked up on my email request for the Crosby/Cole/Moore/Ken

Barnes collaboration of "I Can't Get Started" featuring the bravura performance on trumpet by our own Kenny Baker. "Shanghai", "Calcutta" and that "Slow Boat To China" were among many stop-overs on the BBC Norfolk based Gold For Grown Ups musical travelogue, and if you are a fan of Lionel Hampton his characteristic piano performance on "Pine Top's Boogie Woogie" would have kept you happy - though Bing is definitely in uncharacteristic mode on this track, as Barnsey was to note.

As I typed this report on October 18, Keith Skues came on air on the BBC Eastern Counties network with a three hour programme from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. commemorating Bing's passing all those years ago. This was a remarkable tribute from our local, BBC catchment area, but as Keith did a similar slot for Elvis a while ago he felt it only right to remember Bing in the same way. Keith opened with a brief overview of Bing's career before re-broadcasting an interview with Ken Barnes from 3 or 4 years ago when Ken was publicizing his "Complete United Artists Sessions" CD set. Jim Reilly was then heard in an hour long profile of Bing originally broadcast in his Angel Radio slot some months ago before Stan White came in to note the anniversary of Bing's first recording on October 18, 1926. This segued into a tribute by Stan which was originally broadcast by Radio Northampton in 1985. The average listener would have been completely unaware that the various segments of Keith's programme were not live and we must record our grateful thanks to Keith for such tremendous coverage of the anniversary of Bing's death.

The Real Music Show has one of those titles with which we all heartily concur. BBC North presenter, Henry Ayrton, gives us that a-plenty, and plenty of information to go with the music as well. It's rather sad that such people are confined to local radio, but with the latest innovation of website availability perhaps those with Internet capabilities will be able to access these regional programmes at their leisure in the near future. Too late now to hear Bing singing "Shadow Waltz", "That's For Me" or, from the show of the same name, "The Girl Friend"; but if you can pick up the broadcast you are bound to hear Bing on Henry's great programme.

News has come in of a programme about Bing on Saga Radio which featured Ken Barnes and of a nice tribute by Syd Atkinson on Moray Firth Radio. Also Secretary / Treasurer Michael Crampton was interviewed on Radio Shropshire on October 14 and gave a nice plug for Bing and the ICC. However, other than that, I have no further details. Perhaps I can tell you more next time.

**Bert Bishop** October 2002

*(Editor: Thanks Bert for a most interesting and educated review of the Bing scene on radio & TV. )*

# ONCE IN A WHILE

**Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:**

**Lionel Hampton,** who died on August 31 at the age of 94, was one of America's jazz legends, pioneering and popularizing the vibraphone and teaming up with a long list of jazz greats over a musical career that spanned six decades. Thanks to Hampton, the vibraphone — an instrument with metal keys, played with soft mallets and producing a gently vibrating tone from motor-driven rotating discs under each key — has become a jazz staple. In the 1930s, Hampton joined drummer Gene Krupa and pianist Teddy Wilson in the famous multiracial Benny Goodman quartet. Later, Hampton played a prominent role in Goodman's big band, working on several recording sessions and tours until 1940 when Hampton organized his own permanent orchestra.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Hampton enjoyed immense success with a series of recordings and all-star bands. With business guidance from his wife, Gladys, who died in 1971, Hampton amassed a comfortable fortune over decades of performing. He endowed scholarships and music schools and even erected low- and middle-income housing in Harlem. In recent years, Hampton had been in poor health. He had no children. His interactions with Bing were few but they did record together on January 21, 1946 when "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and the somewhat controversial "Pine Top's Boogie Woogie" were laid down for posterity. Hampton was on his usual vibraphone for the former opus but changed to piano for the latter song of which Fred Reynolds, writing in *The Crosby Collection,* part three said, "There is nothing that could be called pretty about the recording and any interest it may have is as a specimen of the genre and Hampton's rippling and flashy piano."

**Ward Kimball,** Academy Award-winning Disney animator/director who brought life to Mickey Mouse, Jiminy Cricket, The Cheshire Cat, The Mad Hatter And 'The Three Caballeros,' died at the age of 88 on July 8. A pioneering artist who was one of Walt Disney's trusted 'Nine Old Men,' Kimball joined the Disney Studios in 1934 and worked there until his retirement in 1973. He animated or served as directing animator on such classic films as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Pinocchio," "Fantasia," "The Three Caballeros," "Cinderella," "Alice in Wonderland," "Peter Pan," "Mary Poppins," "Bedknobs and Broomsticks" and, most important to Crosby fans, "The Adventures of Ichabod & Mr. Toad" where he probably met Bing for the first time. Two of the animated shorts which Kimball created for Disney — "Toot, Whistle, Plunk

and Boom" (1953) and "It's Tough to be a Bird" (1969) — won Academy Awards. In addition to his major accomplishments in the field of animation, Kimball was a founding member of the popular jazz group, The Firehouse Five Plus Two. He played trombone and led some of his fellow Disney employees in the legendary Dixieland band, which recorded albums, played concerts and appeared both on television and in films. The group was invited to entertain at the victory dinner after Bing's Pro-Am in 1950 and they were rewarded with several appearances on Bing's Chesterfield show when they accompanied Bing in some exciting performances. As a railroad enthusiast, Kimball was among a tight-knit group at the Disney studio who stoked Walt Disney's interest in trains. Kimball, with his wife Betty, built America's first privately operated full-size backyard railroad, called Grizzly Flats R.R., in 1938.

**Matt Dennis,** the arranger / composer and singer died on June 21 in Riverside, California at the age of 89. He came to prominence as staff arranger-composer for the Tommy Dorsey Band in the early 1940s. His most well-known compositions were 'The Night We Called It a Day', 'Angel Eyes', 'Violets For Your Furs', 'Everything Happens to Me' and 'Let's Get Away From It All'. Matt also made a few film appearances including an uncredited "voice of announcer" in the 1947 film *Smash-Up, The Story of a Woman* which was allegedly a dramatised version of Dixie Lee Crosby's life.

**Florence Lessing,** a dancer who performed in films, nightclubs and Broadway musicals, died on September 5. She was 86. Lessing worked with the famous jazz-dance choreographer Jack Cole, who spotted her as a teenager in an East Indian dance class. Lessing, Cole, and the teacher of the class, Anna Austin, formed a trio that performed at the Rainbow Room in 1938 and in the musical "Moon Over Miami" in 1939. Lessing went on to perform in many Broadway shows, including "Windy City," choreographed by Katherine Dunham, and "Sailor Beware" and "Kismet," both choreographed by Cole. Her connection with Bing came when she appeared in the 1952 film musical *Just For You,* as part of The Mexican Ballet.

**Peter Matz,** an Emmy - and Grammy-winning musical director, composer and arranger, died on August 9. He was 73. In a 50-year career of providing music for plays, movies and television, Matz worked on shows featuring such stars as Barbra Streisand, Burt Bacharach and Carol Burnett. The relationship with Barbra Streisand led to a string of accolades for Matz: a Grammy for his arrangements on Streisand's 1964 album, "People"; an Emmy for her 1965 television special, "My Name Is Barbra"; an Academy Award nomination for best original score for her 1975 film, "Funny Lady," and another Grammy nomination in 1986 for arranging, conducting and producing her platinum recording "The Broadway Album." Matz also won an Emmy for a 1973 segment of "The Carol Burnett Show." He was musical director of Burnett's show for eight years. Other stars he worked with included: Peggy Lee, Liza Minnelli, Tony Bennett. and of course, Bing. Matz provided the musical accompaniment to Bing's 1962 album *I Wish You A Merry Christmas* and was also the musical director for Bing's 1974 Christmas Show.

# Father Tony lived on path to peace

**Norman Wolfe writes in tribute to a "Crosby man".**

The passing of Gonzaga's beloved "Father Tony" Lehmann, S.J. at the age of 73 last March 8 took yet another Bing Crosby devotee from us. Father Tony was the kind of Jesuit priest Crosby knew as a boy, deeply religious but unafraid to roll up his sleeves on the playing field. In any one weekend, you might find him performing a marriage, officiating at a funeral, blessing a new home and cheering at a Gonzaga game. He was a padre out of "Going My Way" in an age where there aren't many of those left.

As alumni chaplain and assistant alumni director. Father Tony made his office in Crosby's boyhood home, at 508 E. Sharp Avenue. He took great delight in showing hundreds of tourists around the house each year, getting a particular kick out of calling attention to the initials "HLC" carved by a small boy into a stair rail in the basement.

Late in the 1980s, he began to wonder if people around Gonzaga and Spokane might enjoy recalling the personal association of Christmas with Bing Crosby in the Crosby home. He began saying midnight mass on Christmas Eve, with recorded Crosby music playing before and after. It was far too great a success and overflow crowds and traffic problems forced him to abandon the practice after three years.

In an editorial, noting his death from leukemia. The Spokane Spokesman-Review said: "In these weeks filled with pictures and stories of scandalous priests, disturbed and disturbing dirty old men who beckoned evil into their lives and damaged young people, it is an antidote to celebrate the life of one priest who lived his vows."

Father Tony never permitted anyone to end a conversation with him with "goodbye" and he probably wouldn't like it now. He always insisted on: "To be continued."

**Norman Wolfe**

# Keeping Track

**The Chronological Bing Crosby Vol. 28** **Jonzo Records JZCD 28** **UK**
**July 3, 1940 - December 3, 1940**

1. When The Moon Comes Over Madison Square
2. Only Forever
3. Ballad For Americans (Part 1) *
4. Ballad For Americans (Part 2) *
5. Ballad For Americans (Part 3) *
6. Ballad For Americans (Part 4) *
7. Rhythm On The River
8. That's For Me
9. I Found A Million Dollar Baby
10. Can't Get Indiana Off My Mind
11. The Waltz You Saved For Me*
12. Where The Blue Of The Night
13. When You're A Long, Long Way From Home
14. When I Lost You
15. Paradise Isle
16. Do You Ever Think Of Me? (with The Merry Macs)
17. You Made Me Love You (with The Merry Macs)
18. Legend Of Old California
19. Please
20. You Are The One
21. Prairieland Lullaby
22. Along The Santa Fe Trail
23. Lone Star Trail *
24. It's Always You
25. I'd Know You Anywhere

* = new to CD

*The highlight from the latest of these eagerly awaited issues must be Bing's wonderful version of 'Ballad For Americans'. Paul Robeson recorded it too, taking 3 days to get it right whilst Bing is said to have completed the chore in four hours. It's a remarkable effort by Bing. The song was originally used in a long forgotten revue but it surfaced to great acclaim as a finale of a radio show called 'Pursuit of Happiness'. Bing's voice was at its peak at the time of these recordings and amongst the other classics on the CD, we have the songs from the film 'Rhythm on the River', the superb version of 'Please' and many fans' favourite rendition of 'Where The Blue Of The Night'. Several songs are new to CD so don't forget to get out Wig's 'Bing Crosby's Commercial Recordings' book and mark them off. Running time: 75 minutes.*

**The Chronological Bing Crosby Vol. 29** **Jonzo Records JZCD 29** **UK**
**December 9, 1940 - December 23, 1940**

1. De Camptown Races
2. Did Your Mother Come From Ireland?
3. My Old Kentucky Home (-A) *
4. My Old Kentucky Home (-B) *
5. Where The River Shannon Flows
6. Tea For Two (with Connie Boswell)
7. Yes Indeed! (-A take - With Connie Boswell)
8. Yes Indeed! (-C take - With Connie Boswell) *
9. Christmas Greetings to Decca Employees
10. New San Antonio Rose
11. It Makes No Difference Now (-A) *
12. It Makes No Difference Now (-B)
13. You're Dangerous
14. A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square
15. You Lucky, People, You
16. Birds Of A Feather
17. Dolores (-A take - with The Merry Macs)
18. Dolores (-B take - with The Merry Macs) *
19. Pale Moon (-A) *
20. Pale Moon (-B) *
21. Pale Moon (-C) *

* = new to CD

*The second CD in the current package contains several rarities which will be new to most of us. We must commend John McNicholas (and his helpers) for searching out these hitherto unknown takes. During the period covered, Bing could sing anything brilliantly and this CD demonstrates the wide diversity of his talent. Running time: 64 minutes.*

*These two CDs should be required listening for any new student of Crosbyana. The Jonzo series has become the definitive collection of Bing's commercial recordings and let's hope that we all live long enough to see it through to "1950" when John intends to call it a day.*

*Jonzo albums 28 and 29 are only obtainable in the UK and the rest of Europe from Jonzo Records, PO Box 212, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 7LD. Price £10.70 each postpaid (or both for £21.10). Cheques to be made payable to Jonzo Records. USA and Canadian members should obtain copies from Wig Wiggins (address inside front cover).*

**Songs From Irving Berlin's Holiday Inn and White Christmas** **Universal 1130 992** **UK**

1. Happy Holiday
2. White Christmas (1942 - B take)
13. Blue Skies / I'd Rather See A Minstrel Show / Mandy (with Danny Kaye)
14. Sisters (Peggy Lee and Trudy Stevens)

3. I'll Capture Your Heart (with Fred Astaire & Margaret Lenhart)
4. You're Easy To Dance With (Fred Astaire)
5. Lazy
6. Abraham
7. Be Careful, It's My Heart
8. I Can't Tell A Lie (Fred Astaire)
9. Easter Parade (from film soundtrack)
10. Song Of Freedom
11. I've Got Plenty To Be Thankful For
12. Let's Start The New Year Right
15. The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing (Danny Kaye)
16. Snow (with Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee and Trudy Stevens)
17. Count Your Blessings Instead Of Sheep
18. Choreography (Danny Kaye)
19. Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me (Peggy Lee)
20. What Can You Do With A General?
21. The Old Man /Gee, I Wish I Was Back In The Army with Danny Kaye)
22. White Christmas (with Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee and Trudy Stevens)

*It was a suggestion by Ken Barnes which led to the production of this CD combining the songs from the two films sharing the common bond of 'White Christmas', Irving Berlin and Paramount. Ken was preparing a Diamond Anniversary Edition DVD of 'Holiday Inn' for Universal (who now own Paramount and Decca) and he encouraged Universal to put out a linking CD with the addition of the 'White Christmas' film songs. Sound engineer Peter Reynolds (who has worked his magic on earlier Crosby issues) has re-mastered the songs to produce first class quality sound and overall this makes a very nice package indeed which should be very popular with the general public as well as us Crosby fanatics. On the original commercial recording of 'Easter Parade' it was evident that Bing had a cold, so the soundtrack version has been substituted here and this is a great improvement. The original 1942 recording of 'White Christmas' has also been used and Peter Reynolds has made a marvellous job of restoring this. This must be the best version of the song you will ever hear. The brief sleeve notes are by your Editor (again Ken's suggestion) so I must leave others to comment on them. By the way, can anybody tell us anything about Margaret Lenhart who duets with Bing and Fred on track 3? Did she really exist? I couldn't find out anything about her when drafting the sleeve notes! Running time: 61 minutes.*

**All the Number One Hits** **Goldies Records GLD 25448** **Portugal**

**CD1**

1. Out Of Nowhere
2. Just One More Chance
3. At Your Command
4. Dinah (with the Mills Brothers)
5. Please (1932)
6. Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?
7. You're Getting to be a Habit with me
8. Shadow Waltz
9. Little Dutch Mill
10. Love in Bloom
11. June in January
12. Soon
13. It's Easy to Remember
14. Red Sails in the Sunse

*Running time: 43 minutes*

**CD2**

1. Pennies From Heaven
2. Sweet Leilani
3. Too Marvellous For Words
4. The Moon Got in My Eyes
5. Remember Me?
6. Bob White (with Connie Boswell)
7. I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams
8. Alexander's Ragtime Band (edited - with Connie Boswell)
9. You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby
10. Sierra Sue
11. Trade Winds
12. Only Forever
13. White Christmas (1947)
14. Moonlight Becomes You

*Running time: 42 minutes*

**CD3**

1. Sunday, Monday, Or Always
2. Swinging On A Star
3. Hot Time In The Town Of Berlin (with Andrews Sisters)
4. San Fernando Valley
8. It's Been a Long, Long Time
9. I Can't Begin to Tell You
10. Now is the Hour (radio)
11. My Baby Said Yes (with Louis Jordan)

5. Don't Fence Me In (with the Andrews Sisters) 1
6. I Love You (Porter)
7. I'll Be Seeing You (radio)
12. Connecticut (radio - with Judy Garland)
13. People Will Say We're In Love (radio - with Trudy Erwin)
14. Road To Morocco (with Bob Hope)

*Running time: 40 minutes*

*I also mentioned this 3-CD set in our last issue and I can now give full details having received a copy from Qualiton Imports, Ltd. 24-02 40th Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101 (www.qualiton.com Tel. 718-937-8515/Fax 718-729-3239) for review purposes. The set is issued under license from Intermusic SA and contains Bing's 38 No. 1 hits from the USA charts (as listed in Joel Whitburn's "Pop Memories 1890-1954") plus some bonus tracks. There are no sleeve notes other than the track listing. The quality is excellent throughout although I was surprised to find that some radio tracks had been used on CD3 but frankly they make a welcome change from the more familiar commercial tracks. The set is manufactured in Portugal but is available at many locations in the USA and UK and over the Internet. Price: $25.50 from Qualiton, $28.99 at Tower Records, $35.98 at Amazon.*

**Bing Crosby - At His Best** **EMI Gold 5413432** **UK**

1. That's What Life is All About
2. We've Only Just Begun
3. The Best Things in Life are Free
4. The More I See You
5. A Little Love and Understanding
6. Cabaret
7. Send in the Clowns
8. How Are Things in Glocca Morra?
9. You've Got a Friend (with Harry Crosby)
10. The Way We Were
11. Paris Holiday (with Bob Hope)
12. Spring Spring Spring (with Fred Astaire)
13. In the Cool Cool Cool of the Evening (with Fred Astaire)
4. A Couple of Song and Dance Men (with Fred Astaire)
15. I Love to Dance Like They Used to Dance
16. My Resistance is Low
17. Hello Dolly
18. Heat Wave
19. Breezin' Along with the Breeze
20. What I Did for Love

*A nice mixture of songs extracted from Ken Barnes' United Artists collection. All recorded in 1975 and 1976 with the exception of the Bob Hope duet (track 11). Competitively priced at £6.99*

**Bing Crosby: CBS Radio 1943/1944** **Newsound NFM007** **UK**

1. Swinging On A Star (June 29, 1944) 2. Going My Way (March 9, 1944) 3. It Had To Be You (June 29, 1944) 4. Don't Fence Me In (with the Andrews Sisters - January 25, 1945) 5. Amor (July 6, 1944) 6. Bless 'Em All (June 15, 1944) 7. The One I Love Belongs To Somebody Else (November 30, 1944) 8. I'll Be Seeing You (part only - June 15, 1944) 9. Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby? (November 30, 1944) 10. Oh What A Beautiful Morning (with Trudy Erwin & The Music Maids - December 16, 1943) 11. Sunday, Monday Or Always (October 7, 1943) 12. Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive (with The Charioteers - January 18, 1945) 13. Pistol Packin' Mama (with The Charioteers - December 16, 1943) 14. It's Love, Love, Love (parody with Bob Hope - April 13, 1944) 15. I'm Making Believe (November 30, 1944) 16. Sleigh Ride In July (January 25, 1945) 17. San Fernando Valley (February 24, 1944) 18. Take It Easy (with Marilyn Maxwell & The Music Maids - April 13, 1944) 19. I Promise You (November 30, 1944) 20. Mexicali Rose (March 9, 1944) 21. There's a Small Hotel (with Marilyn Maxwell - June 29, 1944) 22. I Used To Love You (But It's All Over Now) (December 16, 1943) 23. Together (with Marilyn Maxwell - July 6, 1944) 24. I'll Be Home For Christmas (October 7, 1943) 25. White Christmas (December 16, 1943)

Running time: 63 minutes

*In the last issue of BING, I gave details of a CD called 'CBS Radio 1947' numbered NFM007 but admitted that I lacked full details. To remedy this, I ordered the CD from Amazon and after a few delays, the CD finally arrived and turned out to be the one shown above. Excellent sound quality with very accurate sleeve notes, this is a most attractive package of Bing's Kraft songs. The CD should really be titled "NBC Radio 1943-1945" as the KMH was broadcast on the NBC network but why worry about minor points of detail! All of the songs seem to have been lifted from the 5-CD Laserlight set "Bing Crosby Armed Forces Broadcasts - WW2 Radio" issued in 1994 which explains why track 8 fades out early before Bing comes in with dialogue about Infantrymen. The CD is issued by New Sound 2000 Limited, The Studios, 8 Hornton Place, Kensington, London W8 4LZ, UK (phone: 020 7937 0272 - www.newsound2000.com) who also offer CDs by many other artists including Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland and Ella Fitzgerald. Price: £5.95*

**Bing & Friends** **Newsound NSTBX425** **UK**

1. Only Forever 2. Rhythm on the River 3. That's for Me 4. When the Moon Comes Over Madison Square 5. You're Dangerous 6. Birds of a Feather 7. An Apple for the Teacher 8. Still the Bluebird Sings 9. Go Fly a Kite 10. If I Had My Way 11. Too Romantic 12. Sweet Potato Piper 13. April Played the Fiddle 14. I Haven't Time to be a Millionaire 15. Meet the Sun Halfway 16. A Man and his Dream 17. I Have Eyes 18. You're a Sweet Little Headache 19. It's Always You 20. Birth of the Blues 21. The Road to Victory (KMH - October 7, 1943) 22. I'll Be Home For Christmas (KMH - October 7, 1943) 23. Nobody's Sweetheart (The Charioteers - KMH October 7, 1943) 24. One Alone (with

Trudy Erwin - KMH October 7, 1943) 25. I Used To Love You (But It's All Over Now) (KMH - December 16, 1943) 26. Shoo-Shoo Baby (The Charioteers - KMH December 16, 1943) 27. White Christmas (with The Charioteers - KMH October 7, 1943) 28. The Bombardier Song (KMH - March 9, 1944) 29. Mexicali Rose (KMH - March 9, 1944) 30. My Soul Is A Witness For My Lord (The Charioteers - KMH March 9, 1944) 31. Take It Easy (with Marilyn Maxwell & The Music Maids - KMH April 13, 1944) 32. Milkman Keep Those Bottles Quiet (The Charioteers - KMH June 15, 1944) 33. The Day After Forever (KMH - June 15, 1944) 34. Together (with Marilyn Maxwell - KMH July 6, 1944) 35. Put It There Pal (with Bob Hope - KMH June 15, 1944) 36. There's a Small Hotel (with Marilyn Maxwell - KMH June 29, 1944) 37. The General Jumped At Dawn (The Charioteers - KMH June 29, 1944) 38. Square Dance (Roy Rogers - KMH June 29, 1944) 39. San Fernando Valley 40. Snoqualme Joe (KMH July 6, 1944) 41. Sandman (Tommy & Jimmy Dorsey - KMH July 6, 1944) 42. Exactly Like You (with Tommy & Jimmy Dorsey - KMH July 6, 1944) 43. I'll Get By (KMH July 6, 1944 44. I Promise You (KMH - November 30, 1944) 45. The Glow Worm (Spike Jones & His City Slickers - KMH November 30, 1944) 46. With Every Breath I Take (KMH - November 30, 1944) 47. Runnin' Wild (The Charioteers - KMH January 18, 1945) 48. You've Got Me Where You Want Me (with Eugenie Baird - KMH January 18, 1945) 49. Down by the River (KMH - January 18, 1945) 50. It's Easy to Remember (KMH - January 18, 1945) 51. Soon (KMH - January 18, 1945) 52. Swanee River (KMH - January 18, 1945) 53. Strange Music (KMH - January 25, 1945) 54. Jesus is a Rock in The Weary Land (The Charioteers - KMH January 25, 1945) 55. One Meat Ball (with the Andrews Sisters - KMH January 25, 1945) 56. Medley from Rhythm on The River (KMH - January 25, 1945) 57. Introduction - Bing & Rosemary Clooney 58. Isn't This a Lovely Day (with Rosemary Clooney) 59. Anything You Can Do (with Rosemary Clooney) 60. They Say It's Wonderful (with Rosemary Clooney) 61. Ain't We Got Fun (with Rosemary Clooney) 62. Let's Take a Walk Around the Block (with Rosemary Clooney) 63. Summertime (with Rosemary Clooney) 64. Let's Call the Whole Thing Off (with Rosemary Clooney) 65. People Will Say We're In Love (with Rosemary Clooney) 67. Hey Look Me Over (with Rosemary Clooney) 68. Let's Put Out The Lights (with Rosemary Clooney) 69. They Can't Take That Away From Me (with Rosemary Clooney) 70. Everytime I See You I'm In Love Again (Buddy Cole Trio) 71. Any Town Is Paris When You're Young (with Rosemary Clooney) 72. Paris in the Springtime (with Rosemary Clooney) 73. The Last Time I Saw Paris (with Rosemary Clooney) 74. April in Paris (with Rosemary Clooney)

*A 4-CD box set from New Sound 2000 Limited (details above). I have only outline information at present but at £8.99 the set is certainly keenly priced. Looks like the 5-CD Laserlight set "Bing Crosby Armed Forces Broadcasts - WW2 Radio" has been raided again with the remainder of the tracks coming from the Jasmine CD "Hey! Look Us Over" and the Empress CD "Only Forever", both of which were issued in 1993.*

**Bing Crosby I Got Rhythm** **Sounds of Yesteryear DSOY 605** **USA**

Love Is So Terrific (Philco, March 31, 1948) - But Beautiful (Philco version) - Ballerina (Philco, December 17, 1947) - Somebody Loves Me (Philco, February 11, 1948) - Oh! Lady Be Good (Joe Venuti - Philco, February 11, 1948) - Someone To Watch Over Me (Philco, February 11, 1948) - Gershwin Medley (all from Philco, February 11, 1948): 'S Wonderful (with Peggy Lee)- I've Got A Crush On You (with Peggy Lee) - They Can't Take That Away From Me (with Peggy Lee): - I Got Rhythm (with Peggy Lee & Joe Venuti - Philco, February 11, 1948) - Third Prelude For Piano (Oscar Levant - Philco, February 11, 1948) - Saturday Date (with Gloria Woods - Philco, March 31, 1948) - Some Sunny Day (GE, December 18, 1952) - Civilisation (Philco, February 11, 1948) - You're Wonderful (Chesterfield, January 11, 1950) - To See You Is To Love You (GE, December 18, 1952) - Down By The River (KMH, January 18, 1945)

*Originally issued as an LP by Submarine Records in the UK in the early 1980s, all the tracks on this CD are from radio. Haven't heard it myself but I am told that "the sound is good and clear, if not exactly hi-fi." Certainly the original LP was pretty good both in terms of quality and content. However it's not cheap as it costs $13.98 from Amazon or $15 from Tower Records which is a lot for only 40 minutes. From the Record Centre in Birmingham (0121 359 7399) Price £7.50*

**With A Song In My Heart - The Bing Crosby Collection** **EMI / Spectrum 113 005 2** **UK**

1. Hello Dolly
2. Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive (with Andrews Sisters)
3. The Best Things In Life Are Free (1975)
4. Stardust (1939)
5. In The Cool Cool Cool Of The Evening (w. Fred Astaire)
6. The Isle Of Innisfree
7. Indian Summer
8. Careless Hands
9. Around The World
10. Changing Partners
11. Zing A Little Zong (with Jane Wyman)
12. In the Good Old Summertime (1954)
13. Memories
14. The More I See You
15. You've Got A Friend (with Harry Crosby)
16. The Pleasure Of Your Company (with Johnny Mercer)
17. Send In The Clowns
18. I'll Never Fall In Love Again
19. With a Song In My Heart
20. The Way We Were (Palladium version)

*A strange combination, with songs from the 40s and 50s mixed with Ken Barnes' tracks for United Artists. Not sure that this was a wise compilation but apparently it arose from a joint venture between EMI and Universal Music on behalf of Woolworths in the UK. The CD can only be obtained at Woolworths stores and it will be*

*competitively priced. Track 13 is incorrectly listed as 'Memories Are Made Of This' on the CD sleeve. Running time: 58 minutes.*

**Guest Appearances**

**Classic Columbia and OKeh Recordings of Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang Mosaic MD8-213 USA**
**Disc 5**
If I Had A Talking Picture Of You - After You've Gone - Happy Feet - A Bench In The Park - I Like To Do Things For You
**Disc 8**
We're A Couple Of Soldiers, My Baby And Me (rejected take)
*This 8-CD set is a limited edition of 5000 copies focusing on the jazz output of Bing's musical colleagues, Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti and it is perhaps surprising that there is not more Bing content. Interestingly the sleeve notes indicate, with some authority, that the date quoted by most discographies for 'Happy Feet' is incorrect and that it should be March 10, 1930 instead of February 10. It is also indicated that an alternate take of this song came to light too late for inclusion in this set which is certainly new to us Crosby aficionados. Similarly it is stated that the date of the "A Bench In The Park" sessions should, according to the Columbia file cards, be March 21, 1930 instead of March 23. The set is only available by mail order or over the Internet from Mosaic Records, 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, CT 06902. Phone: 203-327-7111/Fax 203-323-3526/ Website: www.mosaicrecords.com. Cost $128*

**Legends of Radio: The Bob Hope Show Radio Spirits 40042 USA**
*A 20-CD set, also available on cassette. Let me quote from the publicity: "An exclusive collection that features some of Hope's greatest radio shows from 1938 to 1954, and includes a stellar list of guests. This landmark collection includes 40 episodes — most available for the first time since they originally aired almost 50 years ago. It also includes a 32-page behind-the-scenes booklet featuring rare photos. . ." Bing is featured in two of the shows, namely December 24, 1946, and October 2, 1951 when he and Jane Russell were Hope's guests. Other stars featured as guests include Judy Garland, Humphrey Bogart, Bette Davis, Rita Hayworth, Orson Welles, Cary Grant, Gary Cooper, Ginger Rogers, Edward G. Robinson, Shirley Temple, Al Jolson, Grace Kelly and Burt Lancaster amongst many others. Price: $69:98, available from over 7000 retail outlets or direct from Radio Spirits, PO Box 3107, Wallingford, CT 06492, USA (Phone: (203) 265-8044), web site: www.radiospirits.com*

**More of the Best Laserlight CD 12 268 USA**
Small Fry (with Johnny Mercer)
*This CD was first issued in 1997 and is a Johnny Mercer album. There is only one track featuring Bing and this is the reason for highlighting the CD now. Keith Parkinson couldn't identify the source of the 'Small Fry' duet and after reference to Lionel Pairpoint, it is thought likely that the track came from a rehearsal session for "Johnny Mercer's Music Shop" #20 which was broadcast on August 17, 1943. Very rare! The CD is still available from Amazon in the USA for $5.98.*

**Frank Sinatra: Classic Duets Capitol 72435-42271-2-2 USA**
Together Wherever We Go (with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, from October 19, 1959 show) - September Song (with Frank Sinatra, from the Edsel Show, October 13, 1957)
*As only two tracks feature Bing, we would normally not have mentioned this CD which has 21 digitally re-mastered recordings from Frank Sinatra's 1957-1960 network television shows during his Capitol era. However, the release of the CD coincides with a PBS Special of the same name scheduled to begin airing on November 29th and it is appropriate to draw members' attention to the new issue. Running Time: 60 minutes*

As we went to press, we were starting to receive details of CDs containing Bing's Christmas songs. Largely reissues but they all help to keep Bing in the forefront of the public's gaze at Christmas time. Keep your eyes open in the shops because the CDs will have disappeared by the time the Spring issue of BING magazine hits the streets.

With many privately produced CDs and CD-Rs appearing, it is perhaps appropriate to mention that we shall not normally review these. We shall stick to 'legitimate' CDs which are available to the general public.

# DVD AND VIDEO CORNER

First some general background for those members who are considering purchasing a DVD player.

DVD, which stands for Digital Versatile Disc, has taken film buffs by storm. All major Hollywood film studios are now releasing new, old and classic titles on DVD, letting movie enthusiasts watch their favourite films in a digital format never seen before. Due to the 'staggered' movie release system, it was important that films on DVD were controlled in some way. DVD movies can sometimes be released in the USA before the original films are actually shown in cinemas in Europe. Obviously this could have an adverse effect on cinema audiences in Europe if the DVD version of the film was readily available there. To get around this problem, a technique was developed to enable Hollywood companies to continue to release movies at different times in different regions and many DVD players have been hard-

coded to accept DVDs that are only meant to be played within one of several designated world regions. The movie studios have collectively divided the planet into zones which correspond to their distribution system. DVD regions are defined as:

Region 1 - U.S., Canada, U.S. Territories
Region 2 - Japan, Europe, South Africa, and Middle East (including Egypt)
Region 3 - Southeast Asia and East Asia (including Hong Kong)
Region 4 - Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, Central America, Mexico, South America, and the Caribbean
Region 5 - Eastern Europe (Former Soviet Union), Indian subcontinent, Africa, North Korea, and Mongolia
Region 6 - Peoples Republic of China
Region 7 - Reserved
Region 8 - Special international venues (airplanes, cruise ships, etc.)

A disc encoded for Region 1 cannot usually be played in a basic Region 2 DVD player for example. In addition to this you should be aware that in some of the regions there are both PAL and NTSC releases. Most U.S. players only support NTSC video while most European players support both NTSC and PAL. In order to play a disc, the player needs to support both the region and the video format. This means that most DVD players in the USA cannot play an European release even if the player has been modified to become a multiregional player. So great care is needed when buying DVDs, or indeed DVD players, outside your own country. Some DVD players have an internal switch setting that allows you to choose the country code. Others have this option hard coded. You may find a lot of advice in newsgroups on the Internet as to how to bypass this feature but be aware that this will usually nullify your warranty. Just because a DVD is coded for a specific region, it does not mean it will play in all countries assigned that region.

Hope that this background briefing hasn't worried you all too much! I have a DVD player which can very easily be amended to play either Region 1 or Region 2 DVDs and I am delighted with it. So let's have a look at what's new this time.

**Holiday Inn** **Universal Pictures 902 804 2. 4** **UK**

It's 60 years since *Holiday Inn* was first released and this Diamond Anniversary Edition DVD (Region 2 encoding only) contains not only one of the best Bing films ever but also several special features. Moving Menus (i.e. instead of stills illustrating the option or scene in question, there are moving pictures performing the same service) lead to the following commands

(a) Play Movie (b) Scene Access (c) Special Features

Press (a) and you get the movie *Holiday Inn* in a newly restored digital picture with Dolby Digital 2 channel mono.

Press (b) and this leads to 24 animated chapters - 6 pages of 4 individually moving images against an animated background.

Press (c) and up pops the Special Features as follows:

1. Audio Commentary by Ken Barnes with archive audio comments from Bing, Fred Astaire & John Scott Trotter.
2. Featurette 1: "A Couple of Song & Dance Men" - Ava Astaire McKenzie (Fred's daughter) in conversation with Ken Barnes. (see the report on the Leeds meeting for further details)
3. Featurette 2: "All Singing-All Dancing: Before & After"
4. Theatrical Trailer
5. Production Background
6. Cast & Crew Profiles

You can return to anyone of these features at any time by pressing 'Main Menu' or any of the subsidiary commands that are on display. Each of the above sections is individually introduced by a separate clip accompanied by appropriate music cues.

The film is great by itself but the added features make this a most attractive package which virtually justifies the purchase of a DVD player by those who haven't got one. All in all, it is a superb DVD and Ken Barnes is to be congratulated for this. Ken hopes that the success of this DVD will encourage Universal to issue more Bing films in the UK. The film including the "A Couple of Song & Dance Men" featurette is also available on video (PAL only).

**The Road To Hong Kong** **MGM Home Entertainment** **USA**

As we went to press, we learned that this DVD was to be issued on December 3. Region 1 encoding only. The specifications are black & white, mono, widescreen/letterboxed, in English with subtitles in English, French and Spanish, dubbed in Spanish. No mention of any extra featurettes. Prices seem to vary between outlets from $12.39 to $17.

DVD 902 804 2 • 11
PLEASE DROP IN BARCODE
DIAMOND • ANNIVERSARY • EDITION
Irving Berlin's
Holiday Inn
With music by Irving Berlin, songs by Bing Crosby and dancing by Fred Astaire, Holiday Inn is one of the most delightful and memorable musicals of all time. Crosby plays Jim Hardy, a song and dance man who leaves showbiz to open a Connecticut Inn. Astaire plays Ted Hanover. Hardy's former partner and rival in love. And, of course there are girls (Marjorie Reynolds and Virginia Dale), an agent (Walter Abel) and plenty of lavish song and dance routines with spectacular production numbers.
It contains all your favourite Irving Berlin hit songs, including the one and only "White Christmas"
SPECIAL FEATURES
A Couple of Song and Dance Men featurette, containing an interview with Ava Astaire MacKenzie
All-Singing, All Dancing: Before & After
Audio Commentary by film historian Ken Barnes with archive audio comments from Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby and John Scott Trotter
Cast and Crew Profiles
Theatrical Trailer
Production Notes
IRVING BERLIN'S HOLIDAY INN STARRING BING CROSBY FRED ASTAIRE WITH MARJORIE REYNOLDS VIRGINIA DALE WALTER ABEL
MUSIC AND LYRICS IRVING BERLIN SCREENPLAY BY CLAUDE BINYON ADAPTATION BY ELMER RICE PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY MARK SANDRICH
© 1942 Paramount Pictures Inc. Renewed 1969 by EMKA. All Rights Reserved.
SUBTITLES: English* Deaf and Hard of Hearing
LANGUAGES: English
UNIVERSAL Suitable for all
*Menu Screens available in these languages
DOLBY DIGITAL
DVD VIDEO
UNIVERSAL
902 804 2
BING CROSBY FRED ASTAIRE
Irving Berlin's
Holiday Inn
Features The Hit Song
WHITE CHRISTMAS

**High Society Warner Home Video USA**
We are told that Warner Home Video will release Bing's 1956 MGM movie HIGH SOCIETY on DVD in 2003. No release date has been set, but right now they're aiming for spring.

**Pennies From Heaven Columbia USA**
There are plans to issue Bing's 1936 classic on DVD on January 28, again Region 1 encoding only. It will be presented in its original 1:33:1 aspect ratio with English mono. Extras will be slim, with only bonus trailers included.

## Bing and Bob - the Fabulous Crosbys

Mark Spry has drawn our attention to this show which is to be presented in the Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall at the Royal Festival Hall, London, at 7:30 pm on December 20. Our old friend Roy Chappell is featured, tickets cost £14 and the advertising states: "Imagine the incomparable Bing Crosby singing and swinging with the hot sounds of brother Bob Crosby's Bobcats. Roy Chappell with Geoff Cole, Alan Gresty/Brian White Ragtimers recreate the magic of these greats from the golden age of Dixieland."

**Malcolm Macfarlane**

Bing Crosby
-Hollywood-

April 15, 1969

Mr. A. J. Harmqn
14 Cragavon Road
Grove Hill
Hemel, Hempstead, Herts., England

Dear Mr. Harmqn:

You were very kind to write me recently, and I'm grateful to you for the kind things you had to say about some of my recent efforts, and some of the things done in the past.

Glad you liked the show with Bob Hope, Jose Feliciano and the Supremes. A lot of talent there. And the show was a genuine pleasure to put together.

I hope when I come to England, we'll be able to have a visit. I don't know just when this will be at the moment, although it should be some time this summer.

I generally stay at the Connaught Hotel, so if you see in the papers that I'm in town, give me a buzz there.

Yes, it's true, they recently released an album in this country called "HEY JUDE/HEY BING". It's some of the popular songs of the day done somewhat in the same manner as the young people are doing them, with probably some new touches that might amuse or entertain you.

I'm sending a new autographed picture, as per your request.

Thanking you for your interest and support -

Your friend,

Bing

Bing Crosby

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